

Beacon Reach

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Peter Toft
Social care inspector	Elaine Clare

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

An inspection of the care provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the national minimum standards for children's homes. This inspection took place at the same time but the full report is published separately on Ofsted's website and should be read in conjunction with this report which covers the educational registration of the school.

Information about the school

Beacon Reach is a children's home and school for young people who have a range of complex learning difficulties and require residential provision for up to a 52 weeks a year; specifically, it aims to meet the needs of those who have severe learning difficulties, are on the autistic spectrum and who, in addition, may exhibit challenging behaviour. It is purpose-built and set in large, private grounds, surrounded by farmland. The school, which is non-denominational, opened in 2010. It caters for boys and girls aged from nine to 17 years. There are six students on roll; five have a statement of special educational needs, and all are looked after in the residential home to which they have been referred and for which they are funded by local authorities.

The school aims to provide 'a person centred environment in which a young person's dignity and individuality are encouraged and developed within a caring atmosphere'. Together with the children's home, it provides a 'Waking Day Curriculum' to help students recognise their own personal strengths and develop the capability to manage life's challenges. This is the first inspection of the school; the children's home was inspected at the same time and last had a social care inspection in May 2010.

The Department for Education requested that this inspection clarify the precise types of special educational needs/and or disabilities for which this school should be registered. This issue was considered by the inspectors and the judgement is contained in the report.

Evaluation of the school

Beacon Reach provides a good quality of education and meets its aims. A good curriculum has been developed to meet the complex needs of the students. Teaching

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

and assessment are good. Lessons are lively, promoting enthusiasm and positive attitudes to learning. Staff transform challenging behaviour when it arises into productive learning; students, as a result, make good progress. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Procedures to secure their safeguarding and welfare are good. All the regulations for continued registration as an independent school are met. It is recommended that the school's registration be altered so that it caters for students with a range of complex learning difficulties who require residential provision for up to 52 weeks a year; specifically those who have severe learning difficulties, are on the autistic spectrum and who may exhibit challenging behaviour.

Quality of education

The quality of the school curriculum is good; this is laudable given the short time the school has had since its recent opening to develop its work. The curriculum is broad, balanced and well supported by a wide range of specialist accommodation and resources. While these are currently being used effectively, there are times when the lack of staff with particular subject specialisms holds back students from reaching the highest levels of attainment. This reflects the school's currently small size. Curricular policies and teaching schemes are well grounded in national guidance such as the National Curriculum and the expectations of examination syllabuses; staff are well versed in these requirements. This helps them develop basic skills in literacy and numeracy, meeting the special educational needs and/or disabilities of the students well as they progress towards adulthood and future economic well-being. Careers advice is given to individuals but provision is not yet sufficiently systematic to meet the needs of the larger numbers of older students which the school plans to have on roll. Vocational learning has been developed, but it is currently limited by the small size of the school; the school plans to develop further provision for land-based learning.

The use of therapy is well incorporated into the curriculum, especially to improve basic speech and language. The formal school curriculum is well supported by a range of experiences in the community and extra-curricular activities; those seen were of good quality, and were promoting students' personal development and participation very well. Further support comes from the 'waking curriculum' provided jointly by the school and the care home, over which there is very good cooperation between staff in the school and the care home.

The quality of teaching and assessment is consistently good. In lessons staff show considerable professional expertise and the capacity to enthuse the students. Relationships are excellent and this, together with the very encouraging manner of the staff, helps staff to manage behaviour well and students to form good attitudes to their work and good cooperation in lessons. The proprietor has been effective in appointing professionals who make a significant contribution to the life and work of the school. The staff are well trained and further training is well structured and based on a careful identification of the needs of the school as a whole and of the individual staff.

The high staff/student ratio and the professional way in which teachers and education care mentors work together contribute to the very productive lessons. Lessons are relaxed and purposeful, reflecting thorough planning in the long, medium and short terms. Staff have high expectations. They make good use of information and communication technology and practical activities to enliven learning. The work set is finely calibrated to meet the specific special educational needs of each student, including the difficulties in communicating which each faces.

Staff use a good range of procedures to assess attainment, to compare this with the attainment of students elsewhere and to track their progress. Staff are well aware of how each student is performing in lessons. Work is marked regularly and thoroughly. Targets are set on the basis of assessment information and they give clarity to lessons. Over the longer term, targets for each student are reviewed and staff are well aware of how attainment compares with, for example, expectations within subjects of the National Curriculum. The impact of the curriculum on students' progress is strengthened by the effective identification of the highly specific needs of each student, including those with a statement of special educational needs. Staff incorporate these requirements in Individual Education Plans, and ensure that students are clear about what they are to learn; this is also aided by the very close liaison between teachers and education care mentors who support individual students during lessons well. The school makes good use of external consultants to develop its assessment procedures.

Students of all ages make good progress given their starting points; the school assesses these as below or well below those of their peers of a similar age nationally. The school has charted this good progress in a range of academic subjects, practical activities and aspects of personal development. Data gathered by staff show that clear progress is being made, for example, in English and mathematics, and in students' personal development. As yet no student has been in the school long enough to have been awarded a nationally accredited qualification; those for whom this is appropriate are currently being prepared for such examinations.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is supported by a well-constructed curriculum of assemblies and specialist lessons, together with lessons in academic subjects which also make a significant contribution. Each day ends with a class tutorial. While these are enjoyed by students and their activities are productive, they do not always contribute sufficiently to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development programme or to the efforts being made to develop the 'waking day' curriculum which is intended to combine the learning in the school and the home. Students are given good opportunities to reflect on their lives and on spiritual and moral matters as was seen, for example, in an assembly which touched upon the beauty of plants growing in spring.

The school, in conjunction with the home, is particularly effective in helping the students to develop personally. This is carefully planned for and draws upon a wide

range of educational, therapeutic and medical expertise from within the staff of Beacon Reach and from beyond. Students make good progress in developing social relationships and communication skills, often from a very low starting point. This influences their increasingly mature behaviour, capacity to work independently and willingness to participate in academic learning.

Relationships are generally good between students, and conflicts are diffused skilfully by staff when they arise. Relationships between staff and students are excellent. Students are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and to develop ways of avoiding conflict and bad behaviour in class. When this fails, staff use a good range of appropriate tactics to bring individuals back into line. The school goes to considerable lengths to identify and deal with the root causes of inappropriate behaviour. Behaviour is good. Attendance is excellent.

The well balanced curriculum, supported by work done in the home, broadens cultural horizons and develops students' awareness of public institutions well. Students enjoy their education, more so they say, than in previous schools. They have good opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and the care home, and to get involved in a range of community activities. The academic curriculum, especially in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology helps to develop students for the world of work.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision to promote students' welfare, health and safety in the school is good. Good provision is made to meet students' specific needs, based upon detailed assessments of risk and needs and well-constructed plans for education, health and care. The curriculum has a good range of opportunities for pupils to learn about healthy eating, drinking and the avoidance of harmful substances. This is supplemented by practical work on cooking, particularly in the care home. School meals are of good quality and much appreciated by the students. Physical education lessons, some external activities such as swimming, and opportunities to play outdoor games at break times give good opportunities for exercise.

Strong policies for health, safety, welfare, countering bullying, and child protection are in operation. The staff/student ratio enables staff to provide excellent levels of supervision throughout the school day, both on site and during external trips. The staff are well trained in child protection procedures, including the designated officer. Practical activities are carefully supervised. Procedures to assess attainment and risk, including those related to behavioural problems, are rigorous, not least during the initial 'nurture programme' which all students go through in their first few weeks in the school and home. These procedures are maintained through regular and frequent reviews of the progress of students against those of their individual plans which deal with health, safety and care. Admissions and attendance registers are kept as required. The school fulfils its obligations with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The suitability of all staff to work with students has been checked, including the proprietor and those on the managing board. The information is held on a single central register of staff as required.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The educational facilities are designed, built and decorated to a very high standard. Provision for specialist learning in art, design and technology, information and communication technology, music and science is very good. The school is well placed to use its extensive grounds further to develop agriculture and land-based learning.

Provision of information

Parents, carers and staff in the placing local authorities are provided with a good range of information about the school through the website, prospectus and newsletters. They are well informed about the progress of students through regular meetings, formal and informal, and reports.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The schools' procedures for handling complaints meet the regulations.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

In the social care inspection, the care provision was judged to be inadequate because national minimum standards were not met in aspects of safeguarding. This represents a limiting judgement and therefore the effectiveness of boarding provision is judged to be inadequate. A full report on the care provision is available on Ofsted's website and should be viewed in conjunction with this report.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').³

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made

- strengthen the school's range of expertise in the teaching of specialist subjects
- strengthen provision for careers guidance and vocational learning
- improve the contribution which tutorial time makes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		√		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		√		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		√		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		√		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		√		
The behaviour of pupils		√		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		√		
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The quality of boarding provision

Effectiveness of boarding provision				√
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special		
Date school opened	February 2010		
Age range of pupils	9–17		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 4	Girls: 2	Total: 6
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of boarders	Boys: 4	Girls: 2	Total: 6
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 4	Girls: 1	Total: 5
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 4	Girls: 2	Total: 6
Annual fees (day pupils)	£N/A		
Annual fees (boarders)	£165,000 – £192,000		
Email address	info@beaconreach.co.uk		
Headteacher	Victoria Potter		
Proprietor	Beacon Reach Ltd.		