

Pear Tree School

Independent special school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Christine Inkster HMI

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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}

Information about the school

Pear Tree School is a small independent special day school situated on a working farm. It provides education for up to nine students aged between eight and 18 years. It caters for students with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties who live in children's homes operated by the Pear Tree Organisation. There are currently six students on roll, two of whom are above compulsory school age. The vast majority of students have experienced disruption to their education prior to joining the school. The school opened in September 2005 and its last inspection was in January 2008.

The school aims to:

'provide learning experiences in a variety of settings in order to break down barriers to formal education; to help students overcome avoidance strategies and encourage receptiveness and motivation to learn; this process being the first step toward a new future in education. The intention is that, wherever possible, students will be re-integrated into mainstream schools or other educational facilities independent of Pear Tree'.

Evaluation of the school

Pear Tree School provides an outstanding quality of education and successfully meets its aims. The quality of teaching and assessment are good and the curriculum is outstanding enabling students to make outstanding progress in their learning and personal development. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their behaviour are outstanding. Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of students in the school are outstanding; safeguarding arrangements are in place and meet all requirements. The school has expanded and improved the curriculum even further and is addressing the one issue identified at the last inspection in respect of the quality of written marking, although highly effective oral feedback is given to students to enable them to improve their work. The school meets all of the regulations for registration as an independent school.

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

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding. It offers a breadth of experiences that meet students' needs and interests extremely well with a good balance between academic and vocational education. The curriculum is personalised to ensure that each student develops academically, socially, physically, emotionally and creatively. The curriculum is regularly reviewed to ensure that it remains relevant to the particular students within the school. There is a strong emphasis on the development of basic skills and students follow very structured programmes of literacy and numeracy on an individual basis. Care workers from the children's homes owned by the company are present during lessons and this significantly aids communication and understanding of students' learning needs. This enables care workers to support and extend students' learning out of school and provides a holistic approach to meeting students' needs. Planning is based on a wide variety of short units of work which are accredited by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) and on National Curriculum programmes of study.

There are exceptional opportunities for students to gain first-hand experience of all aspects of working on a farm. They care for horses, sheep, poultry, dogs, ferrets, a pig and bees and older students learn to drive a tractor and sit-on lawn mowers. They particularly enjoy learning to ride the horses, in some cases, with great success. They develop highly valuable skills in woodwork enabling them to make, for example, bookshelves and chairs. They also learn skills such as painting and decorating and domestic skills which prepare them very well for independent living in the future. Students say they greatly enjoy their lessons in art and they produce high quality work. There is a very good programme of extra-curricular activities including residential visits such as to France and London and a wide variety of outdoor pursuits including canoeing, gorge walking, mountain biking and camping. Students can also follow particular interests such as fishing or joining the army or air cadets. A large number of visits are organised to support aspects of the curriculum, for example, visiting a local cathedral, castles and museums as well as different places of worship. The outstanding quality of the curriculum does much to promote students' enjoyment of school. They are engaged and willing to participate in lessons because the curriculum is interesting and teachers make it relevant to their lives.

The quality of teaching and assessment are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use skilful questioning to engage students in their learning. Students are encouraged to expand on their responses and give reasons for their answers. Teachers know students very well and provide work which is suitably challenging. However, there is not yet a consistent written format for planning individual lessons to show how students are expected to progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding in each lesson or written evaluations of how well students have achieved. Wherever possible, students are encouraged to work independently and take responsibility for their learning. There are excellent relationships between adults and students and consequently, students demonstrate positive attitudes to learning because they know the adults have their best interests at heart. Any misconceptions

are handled sensitively and appropriate praise is given which successfully promotes students' confidence and self-esteem. Good use is made of information and communication technology to enable students to practise their literacy and numeracy skills and present their work in different formats. Students are assessed on entry to the school and the vast majority have skills and abilities well below average, as they have experienced disruption to their education or have had negative attitudes to learning. Their progress is closely monitored; they are given the individual support they need and once they have settled into the school environment, their rate of progress accelerates.

Students make outstanding progress, bearing in mind their starting points and, as a result, they are exceptionally well prepared for success in their future lives.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students say they greatly enjoy school and they are keen and motivated to learn. Their behaviour is outstanding and their attendance is high. Students value the support given by staff and as one student states, 'It's fantastic. You can't get a better school' and another comment was, 'My school helps me learn right from wrong'. Many students arrive at school with very low self-esteem and a lack of confidence. Staff know the students well and students know they can turn to adults if they need someone to confide in or seek help if needed. There is mutual trust and respect between staff and students and, as a result, students make outstanding progress in their personal development and social relationships. Care staff work very closely with education staff to ensure a holistic and consistent approach to meeting the needs of all students. All the students and staff from the school and children's homes enjoy attending Christmas and Summer Balls which does much to promote students' social development. They develop their spiritual awareness through working on the farm and learning about the wonder of nature around them. They are developing their awareness of their own and other cultures through visits to places of worship and celebrating festivals of different faiths including through a Festival of Light. Students readily take on challenging tasks and responsibilities within school, for example, in caring for the animals on the farm and acting as volunteers at a local Wildlife Trust. They are often involved in fund raising activities, such as a 'Fun Run' for cancer research or supporting the 'Shoebox Appeal'. They are developing a wide range of skills which prepare them extremely well for future employment and independent living. They develop their enterprise skills, for example, through running a farm shop and develop an appropriate work ethic and earn money through weekend jobs on the farm.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. The highly informative website provides extremely detailed policies, procedures and guidance on all the school's routines. The school has taken rigorous action to ensure that all safeguarding guidance is implemented effectively to keep students safe. All staff

have received up-to-date child protection training, first aid training and fire awareness training. An extensive range of risk assessments are carried out for all aspects of school life, including those for activities taking place off site as well as those on the farm. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own safety and that of others. They are fully aware of how to keep themselves safe, for example, when working outdoors or using the internet. Students understand how to live healthy lifestyles and relish the opportunity to eat fruit and vegetables they have helped to grow. They enjoy a wide range of physical activities, such as swimming, walking and mountain biking as well as visiting a local gymnasium. Students are also taught first aid and how to develop independent living skills, so that by the time they leave the school they are able to lead healthy, safe and independent lives. The school fulfils its responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school has suitable recruitment procedures in place and the proprietor has recently undertaken 'safer recruitment' training. All members of staff currently employed at the school have undergone enhanced checks, including those with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). The school maintains a single central register as required by regulations.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The school premises consist of farm buildings including a classroom in the farmhouse kitchen, a portakabin which provides an additional classroom, an art room and a woodwork studio in another location. The teaching accommodation is suitable for the small class groups at the school. The farmhouse is situated in 25 acres of land, including farmland and woodland. This provides excellent opportunities for students to participate in a wide range of outdoor education and vocational learning. There are attractive wildlife gardens and areas where students are able to assist in growing vegetables, fruit and herbs. There are stables and a riding arena and all students have the opportunity to care for the horses and other animals in addition to learning to ride.

Provision of information

A wide range of information is available to parents, carers and local authorities. There is a very attractive and informative website which provides comprehensive and detailed information, particularly in respect of the ethos of the school and the curriculum it provides. It makes clear the arrangements for admission and gives information about the range of school policies available. Annual reports give parents, carers and placing authorities' detailed and valuable information about student's progress at the school.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's procedures for handling complaints meet requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Ensure there is a consistent written format for planning and evaluating individual lessons to show how students are expected to progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding and to indicate how well students have achieved.

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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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Secondary BESD		
Date school opened	September 2005		
Age range of pupils	8-18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 5	Girls: 1	Total: 6
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£16,484		
Telephone number	01388 776799 / 07801 595803		
Email address	david.bartlett@peartreeprojects.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr David Bartlett		
Proprietor	Mr David Bartlett		