

Northeast Manor School

Independent school standard inspection report

DfE registration number	845/6028
Unique Reference Number (URN)	114645
Inspection number	375470
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Martyn Groucutt

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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

Northeast Manor is an independent residential special school, run as a charitable trust, for pupils between 10 and 17 years of age. The school opened in 1963, with the aim of supporting pupils with specific learning difficulties. Over the last decade the school has been taking pupils with an increasing range and complexity of needs including dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, Attention Deficit Disorder, social and communication difficulties and Asperger's Syndrome. Boys make up 78% of the 98 pupils on roll. Eighty three per cent have a statement of special educational needs and 78% are funded by local authorities. The school was last inspected in July 2007. A separate inspection of boarding facilities was undertaken by Ofsted in March 2011 and the full report is published on Ofsted's website.

Evaluation of the school

This is a good school that successfully meets its aims. The quality of education is good and, as a result of the good teaching, pupils make good progress in their learning. They enjoy school and show courtesy and respect for one another. Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good and the school meets all requirements in respect of safeguarding. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained a high quality of education. It has responded well to the points for improvement in the last report. It now meets all but one of the regulations for independent schools.

The school has been going through a phase of change and development since the appointment of the current headteacher in 2008. Parents and carers are generally supportive, although a minority expressed strong reservations about recent changes that have been made to the way the school is now run and administered; inspectors looked into these concerns thoroughly. The governing body is supportive of the school and positive about its plans for improvement. Concerns were raised by former governors and these, and parent and carer concerns, were looked into in detail during the inspection before inspectors made their judgements.

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 curriculum is good and pupils benefit from a wide range of learning experiences. The curriculum is based on the National Curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4, leading primarily to GCSE, with elements of more vocationally based learning. The focus on delivering five hours of literacy skills a week is effective in supporting pupils with dyslexia and associated learning difficulties. In addition to the strengths of English and mathematics, subjects such as art and drama, physical education and technology continue to be strong. Rightly, the school recognises the need to broaden the curriculum further to meet the diverse needs of its pupils. Links with other providers are therefore starting to develop, as reflected in the group of pupils who now attend Plumpton College to undertake a horticulture course. Visits and visitors, and a range of clubs and activities such as Eco-Warriors, enhance the informal elements of the curriculum. The boarding facilities provide good opportunities to extend learning for boarders, with access to after-school activities for day pupils. The school grounds are spacious and significantly support the curriculum, offering very good opportunities for different sports activities which encourage pupils to be fit and healthy.

Teaching and assessment are good so pupils display effective learning and they make good progress. Teachers work well with speech and language therapists and occupational therapists to meet pupils' needs. There has been an increase in the therapy within classrooms and additional provision made, such as the creation of friendship groups aimed at pupils with social or communication problems. The teachers are primarily subject specialists, but many have acquired specific expertise to help them to address the difficulties experienced by the pupils. The creation of an effective leadership team is enhancing classroom observations and performance management, and staff have undertaken an impressive range of professional development courses. The quality of computers available for classroom use has recently been enhanced, as seen to good effect in a Year 7 drama class, where pupils researched the life of an actor in ancient Greece. Teachers generally have high expectations of their pupils and the requirements of individual education plans are met. In the best lessons, the good variety of activities and styles of teaching maintain pupils' interest and engagement. In such lessons, behaviour is very good, although in the few lessons where there is less pace, or where individual needs are not met effectively, poor behaviour can sometimes disrupt learning. Small classes allow teachers to give a high level of individual attention. However, in a small number of instances, lesson planning does not always take full account of the increasing complexity of needs.

Generally, the school is making good use of data to enable it to track the progress of individual pupils. Each student now has predicted grades for GCSE, which are updated over time to ensure that they are on track, or exceeding the prediction wherever possible. Monitoring of pupils' progress is developed more strongly in some subject areas. Those departments that have taken most enthusiastically to the

enhanced use of tracking data are those that are producing the best results, such as English and art.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school is successfully building the self-esteem and confidence of young people who had spent much of their previous school lives feeling like failures, and their more positive attitude to learning is reflected in their high attendance. A scheme for personal, social and health education was introduced in January 2011. This has created a single whole-school approach to personal development, encouraging pupils to develop their perspectives of right and wrong. The scheme encourages working with individuals to support their behaviour and gain acceptance that they must take responsibility for their actions. It also enables a full citizenship course to be delivered. Pupils' personal and social development is also supported through good practice within the boarding provision.

A fairly sizeable minority of teachers and parents feel that the procedures adopted by the school detract from the effectiveness of individual teachers' discipline and can be seen as a reward for misbehaviour when a direct 'punishment' is not handed out. Nevertheless, pupils' behaviour is generally good. The confrontations with senior pupils referred to in the last inspection report have diminished significantly. Future economic well-being is supported well through the development of skills in literacy, numeracy and technology. It is also supported by the broadening of the curriculum, the pupils attending Plumpton College undertaking a course in horticulture being one example. There are effective links with the local Connexions service and appropriate careers education, and Year 10 pupils participate in work experience.

Pupils make a positive contribution to the life of the school and community, such as gaining the Sports Leadership award. They are encouraged to join organisations and participate in events, providing opportunities to develop understanding of the local community. Fundraising for research into Alzheimer's disease and diabetes are good examples of positive action being taken by pupils. The school council takes its responsibilities seriously, seeking to represent pupils' views. Pupils have opportunities to develop their understanding of issues affecting people in other parts of the world, for instance how those affected by tsunamis can be helped. However, more could be done to support pupils' cultural development.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good and all the required procedures for safeguarding are in place. Child protection training is part of the induction training for all staff, and is updated termly. Relevant checks are made before staff are appointed. Bullying is not tolerated and government guidance is reflected in the school's policy. Risk assessments and health and safety checks are

carried out rigorously. Staff are deployed to provide effective supervision, including the hand-over of pupils from care to education staff and vice-versa. Pupils feel safe at school. They take part in a range of sporting and other physical activities which contribute to healthy lifestyles.

First aid provision is good and dispensing of medication is properly recorded and checked in both the school and boarding accommodation. The school complies with its responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school meets all the regulations in respect of suitability of staff and proprietors. There are robust procedures for making the necessary checks on staffing appointments, including those of the Criminal Records Bureau. The single central record includes all the required information on staffing.

Premises and accommodation at the school

Buildings are well maintained and site security is effective. The main buildings and the extensive and well-laid out grounds create a pleasant environment in which to live and learn. Middle school pupils are currently based in demountable classrooms that are coming towards the end of their useful lives; plans for replacing them are already underway.

Provision of information

All the required information is provided in the school's prospectus, on the website, or, where appropriate, on request. However, the criteria for admissions and the range of pupils' needs catered for lack clarity. At the moment, the school does not provide an annual statement of account to local authorities who place pupils at the school, as required by regulation. However, two questionnaires returned by placing authorities show support for the quality of provision made for their young people.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

Procedures for handling complaints at both the formal and informal stages are fully in place. The school complies fully with the appropriate regulations, including those pertaining to boarding.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

In the recent Ofsted inspection, the care provision was judged to be outstanding and national minimum standards were met during the recent inspection of residential elements of the school. 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’), with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- ensure that when a pupil who is registered at the school is wholly or partly funded by the local authority, an annual account of income received and expenditure occurred in respect of that pupil will be submitted to the local authority and on request to the Secretary of State (paragraph 24(1)(h)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- strengthen pupils’ cultural development by providing more opportunities to develop pupils’ understanding of different communities
- ensure that all departments make best use of pupils’ progress data to maximise pupils’ progress
- improve teachers’ planning so that it always takes greater account of the increasingly complex range of pupils’ individual needs
- improve the school prospectus so that admissions criteria and the range of needs catered for are clearer.

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

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	Residential Special School		
Date school opened	4 February 1963		
Age range of pupils	10–17		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 77	Girls: 21	Total: 98
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of boarders	Boys: 37	Girls: 7	Total: 44
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 58	Girls: 18	Total: 76
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£19,416		
Annual fees (boarders)	£26,550		
Address of school	Northeast Manor School Rodmell Lewes East Sussex BN7 3EY		
Telephone number	01273 472915		
Email address	office@northeast.co.uk		
Headteacher	Carmen Harvey-Browne		
Proprietor	Board of Governors		