

Children's Home URN 113952

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Mick Megee
Social care inspector	Brian McQuoid

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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

The school is part of the Camphill Movement and was opened in 1951. The school, located in a rural situation, provides education based on Steiner Waldorf principles for up to 55 pupils aged from 6 to 19 years. The school is dually registered as a children's home and its previous social care inspection was in March 2010. Currently there are 39 pupils on roll of whom 33 live in houses situated around the campus. All pupils have moderate, severe or complex learning difficulties and most have a statement of special educational needs. All are funded by their home local authority. The school forms part of a wider community situated within 50 acres of grounds that are used to support the activities of all residents.

The school aims to create a community in which young people vulnerable due to their circumstances, with moderate, severe or complex learning difficulties, can learn and work with others in building relationships based on mutual care and respect. The school's guiding principle is 'the education of the whole person'.

The pupils are divided into lower school and senior school. The latter is for pupils above the statutory school leaving age. The educational provision was last inspected in October 2007. At the time of the current inspection, the principal, who was appointed in the summer of 2008, was on long-term absence for health reasons and the head of education (who was appointed in June 2011) was acting as the principal.

Evaluation of the school

The school provides a good quality of education that meets its aims and maintains the good standards identified at the previous inspection. Pupils' progress is good because of the good quality teaching and curriculum. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, as is their behaviour. Provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is satisfactory; not all of the required

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

safeguarding arrangements are in place. The overall effectiveness of the boarding provision is outstanding. The school meets most of the independent school regulations.

Quality of education

The school provides a good curriculum that successfully combines academic, vocational and therapeutic aspects, with particular reference to Steiner Waldorf education. The school has developed detailed curriculum policies and schemes of work. These ensure that pupils' experience of education is coherent and continuous, especially where there is a wide age range within a class.

The curriculum has a strong emphasis on creative learning through lessons on painting, crafts, drama, eurhythmics and music. The curriculum is planned to facilitate learning that takes account of each pupil's needs, capabilities and aspirations. The school, through careful mapping of its curriculum themes, has ensured that all pupils have access to all subjects of the National Curriculum. The school offers students at post-16 a number of good curriculum options, often based away from the school in the wider community, including life skills and craft workshop experiences.

Pupils have good opportunities to develop their basic skills in communication, literacy and numeracy throughout the day, and to achieve appropriate qualifications, such as ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) Personal Progress Awards. Information and communication technology (ICT) is not yet used in many subjects and the school acknowledges that this is an area that requires development in order to motivate and engage pupils further, especially those who have difficulty in understanding the spoken word. A good programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship is interwoven into all lessons and underpins the general curriculum. Residential staff and the school nurse make a strong contribution to this aspect of learning.

There are good curricular links with other schools, including Steiner schools, and with a local college and a riding centre. These links enable pupils to attend interesting vocational programmes and to undertake additional sports and leisure activities.

Teaching and assessment are good overall. Pupils are making good progress overall, but in ICT it is satisfactory. Girls' progress is slightly less than that of boys, and the school is currently investigating how this gap may be closed.

The keynotes of the good teaching and learning are the very positive relationships between all adults and pupils, the small classes and high ratio of staff to pupils. Therapists, volunteers and care staff all play an important part in lessons and provide good personal support to the pupils. Pupils learn effectively and make good progress because the staff know them well, are able to intervene quickly if any difficulty arises and give constant reassurance and encouragement. Lesson plans are very detailed in terms of the activities which will take place. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to promote individual learning because the plans do not always set out

explicit individual learning objectives and teaching strategies to meet pupils' varying learning needs. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects, and pupils clearly enjoy the activities and the constant, kind attention that they receive. Generally, there is good encouragement to pupils to be active and independent learners. In a few lessons, however, there is too much whole-group teaching and pupils are passive for too long a period. This slows down progress within those lessons.

Staff assess pupils' progress regularly, maintaining detailed records. Most, but not all, staff use this information well in their lesson planning. Since September 2010 the school has begun to gather and carry out a formal analysis of these assessments every term. This is in order to identify quickly where further support is needed and to provide more frequent reports than the former annual report to parents and carers and local authorities. Pupils are beginning to be involved in assessing their own efforts.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This reflects a palpable, common commitment by all to the Steiner Waldorf principles of holistic education. By receiving constant encouragement and positive feedback, pupils quickly gain resilience and the confidence to succeed. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are sensitive to each others' feelings and assist each other and staff unbidden. Staff value the many ideas the pupils' council has of how to improve the school, such as renewing playground equipment. In a meeting with inspectors, pupils all said that their 'co-worker' would be the first person to whom they would turn if they had a personal difficulty or problem.

Pupils' spiritual development is fostered very well through attendance at chapel, assemblies, 'religion' lessons and the celebration of many festivals throughout the year. Pupils perform and participate fully in these events, which are key anchor points in the pupils' life at the school, enabling them to reflect on and to gain a clearer understanding of their own place in the wider world. The estate and woodlands provide many opportunities for experiencing the wonder of the natural world.

Pupils make an excellent contribution to their community through, for example, planning events and helping out with domestic chores. Pupils work for the community shop, help with milk deliveries, saw up logs in the school's woodland and grow vegetables in the garden. Pupils maintain the grounds in a local cemetery.

Pupils have a very good understanding of different faiths, cultural differences and diversity through the international make-up of the staff and volunteers. Pupils demonstrate their enjoyment of school by their mature interactions and their very good attendance. The life chances of pupils are greatly enhanced by their fast development of skills they will need in later life, such as communication, literacy and

numeracy. Pupils receive very good careers guidance and have very good opportunities for work experience.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. Staff have received the appropriate level of training in child protection and the detailed child protection policy gives clear up-to-date guidance. Staff are vigilant in looking after pupils and promote the highest standards of behaviour. Consequently, pupils feel safe and instances of bullying are rare.

The school makes checks on all volunteers to confirm their suitability to work with children. Many volunteers work in an unsupervised capacity. For volunteers who have come from outside the United Kingdom, rigorous checks are made in their country of origin. But, after arrival, enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are not then obtained and this and other required information is not included in the school's single central register. Although this is a breach of the regulations, it has no detrimental impact on the pupils' safety and well-being. The school's admission and attendance registers do not contain all the required information.

The school promotes healthy lifestyles well through the PSHE curriculum, after-school clubs in aerobics and running, and through the provision of home-cooked organic foods and bread. Every pupil undertakes five hours of intensive physical exercise or sport a week. The school has an appropriate plan to fulfil its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All regulations are met. The school effectively implements a rigorous recruitment policy. The single central record of staff checks confirms that all appropriate checks have been made on staff employed by the school or other agencies to ensure the suitability of those working with children.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school's premises and accommodation enable students to learn effectively in comfort and safety. Classrooms are spacious, suitably furnished, well lit, ventilated and heated. There is separate accommodation for younger and older pupils. The school has a range of specialist facilities including a therapy suite that supports elements of Steiner Waldorf education, such as 'eurhythmy', as well as a range of other therapies. Other facilities include a swimming pool, theatre, activity hall, craft workshops and quiet rooms. The extensive campus is used well for games, recreation and woodcraft and to enrich learning.

Provision of information

Parents and carers receive regular written reports as well as frequent formal and informal meetings to discuss their children's progress. The school keeps in close frequent touch with parents by telephone, text and email. The prospectus information that appears on the website is clear, accurate and up-to-date, but not all the required information is made available.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a clear and well-written complaints policy and procedures that fully meet all requirements.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The care provision is judged to be outstanding overall and almost all national minimum standards were met. 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 provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- ensure that an enhanced CRB check is made on all volunteers who work in an unsupervised capacity with pupils and that the school's single central register contains full information about the CRB and other checks made on such volunteers (paragraph 7)
- ensure that the admission register contains information of an emergency telephone number for parents and whether the pupil is a boarder or a day pupil and that attendance registers distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absence using the recommended codes when recording the presence or absence of all day pupils (paragraph 17).

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

- make available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils, and on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State, or an independent inspectorate the name and address for correspondence of the chairperson of the board of governors (paragraph 24(1)(a))

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

- make available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils, and on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State, or an independent inspectorate:
 - particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language
 - particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations
 - the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 24(1)(b)).

Please see the report on Ofsted’s website relating to the care provision in the children’s home which should be read in conjunction with this report.

What the school could do to improve further

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

- improve lesson plans so that all set out explicit individual learning objectives and teaching strategies to meet pupils’ varying learning needs
- plan lessons so as to avoid excessive periods of whole-group teaching
- ensure that all staff use assessment information effectively in their lesson planning.

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 school for pupils with moderate, severe or complex learning difficulties		
Date school opened	1951		
Age range of pupils	6–19 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 28	Girls: 11	Total: 39
Number of boarders	Boys: 25	Girls: 8	Total: 33
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 28	Girls: 11	Total: 39
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 8	Girls: 4	Total: 12
Annual fees (day pupils)	£27,570		
Annual fees (boarders)	£73,287		
Telephone number	01425 477488		
Email address	allisonh@sheilingschool.co.uk		
Principal	Allison Hope-West (acting principal)		
Proprietor	Sheiling Trust		