

Farm Cottage

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Mike Thirkell
Social care inspector	Sophie Wood

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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.

An interim 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 and the 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

Farm Cottage is a children's home which provides facilities for their full-time education. It is situated in a rural position in a converted farm cottage overlooking open countryside and is owned and administered by the CastleCare group of schools and children's homes. Young people are placed at the home by a wide range of English local authorities. Students stay at the home for varying degrees of time depending on their need. The school is registered for a maximum of two students between the ages of eight and 17 years and currently provides for one student who has a statement of special educational needs. The school's core aim is to reintegrate students back into mainstream education. The last inspection of the educational facilities by Ofsted took place in October 2007. The last inspection of the care provision by Ofsted's Children's Directorate was in August 2010.

Evaluation of the school

The school meets its core aim successfully and has made good progress since the last inspection. The quality of education is good and students make good progress both personally and academically which enables them to move to the next stage of their education. Relationships are good throughout; behaviour is good and teachers and care staff work effectively together. Teaching is carefully planned and assessment strategies are used well to monitor students' progress. Students are well cared for and procedures for ensuring their welfare, health and safety and for safeguarding them are good. All the requirements for registration as an independent school are met, including those highlighted as unmet by the last inspection. The overall quality of boarding was judged to be good.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good, as it provides a wide range of opportunities for students to learn and to make progress. Provision is matched effectively to the abilities and aptitudes of the students and to the requirements of their statements of

special educational needs. It includes access to all required areas of learning and the subjects of the National Curriculum, including French, music, religious education and calligraphy and is appropriate to support students moving back into mainstream education. Consultation between teaching and care staff ensures that the provision is well matched to the students' personal as well as academic needs. Planning is supported by access to an appropriate range of nationally published guidance. Schemes of work are prepared thoroughly and guided by clear expectations set out in the curriculum policy, which emphasises the importance of identifying gaps in students' learning and planning to meet their individual needs.

Students develop good skills in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy. Provision for developing communication skills is excellent. Teaching and care staff provide effective support to encourage students to express themselves clearly and to listen to the views of others. Calligraphy, provided at the students' request, has contributed significantly to improvements in handwriting and in the presentation of written work. Opportunities for creative work are supported through art and by making flying models of aircraft with the support of care staff.

A programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) is appropriate to the students' needs and supported by well-chosen schemes of work. Their personal development is guided effectively by teaching and care staff. Provision for extra-curricular and enrichment activities is excellent. Several visits to the Natural History Museum have provided support for learning, for example in relation to the study of tectonic plates in geography. A wide range of sporting activities is provided, including visits to local sports centres. Students' developing communication and social skills, as well as their developing academic competencies, provide good preparation for the next stage of their education and the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Teaching demonstrates aspects of outstanding practice. As a result, students make good progress. Relationships between teachers and care staff and the students are excellent. All staff show high expectations for students' conduct and responses, as well as for their ability to achieve academically. Clear boundaries for behaviour and response are established and they are applied consistently by all staff. Lessons are sometimes punctuated with laughter, reflecting the students' developing enjoyment of learning.

Lessons are well planned and structured to ensure a progression of learning. Resources are sufficient and used well to support topics; this represents an improvement since the last inspection. Teaching makes imaginative use of simple resources to support the students' understanding, for example in geography to demonstrate the impact of earth tremors. Learning support assistants provide good support, but the school recognises the need to involve them more fully in planning opportunities for learning. Questions are used effectively in lessons to challenge students to use previous knowledge to deduce answers and to encourage where they show uncertainty. Teachers' good subject knowledge and careful preparation

enable them to make learning both interesting and relevant, for example, in a history lesson through references to the local village in the Doomsday Book.

Procedures and practice for monitoring and assessing students' progress are good. The school provides appropriate base-line assessments when students enter the school and makes every effort to gain information about their previous attainment. Procedures used to monitor and track students' progress are appropriate and supported well by electronic data collection. The process ensures that specific areas of weakness or need are identified so that they can be included in lesson plans. Daily meetings between teachers and care staff ensure good levels of feedback about progress and discussion of personal needs. Underlying the good quality of assessment are the positive relationships between the teacher and students; these support discussions about progress. Despite the strength of assessment procedures students are not yet involved sufficiently in assessing their own work. The school recognises a need to extend students' opportunities in this respect and there are plans to implement this development.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. Opportunities for raising their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence are provided through the use of praise and encouragement and frequent occasions when staff and students talk together. The outstanding range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities provided is a significant support to this aspect of students' development.

Students are encouraged to distinguish right from wrong, supported by a well-prepared programme of PSHE. Staff provide good role models and set clear expectations with regard to behaviour. Skills in relation to social interaction and consideration of others are emphasised, including at lunchtimes when staff and students eat together around the large kitchen table. Students are expected to make a contribution to community life through helping with tasks in the home, for example by tidying their rooms, shopping for food and occasionally contributing to decorating tasks. Knowledge of the law is supported through citizenship and through visits to the school by a local police officer. Behaviour and attendance at school are good and reflect students' positive attitude to learning.

Students develop a good knowledge of public institutions and services in England through citizenship and regular visits linked to the curriculum or as enrichment activities. They are encouraged to join groups such as the sea scouts and to visit the local library and fire station. They develop a good knowledge and appreciation of their own and other cultures through the curriculum. Religious education is used effectively to promote knowledge of different religions as well as tolerant attitudes towards people from different cultural traditions.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Procedures for promoting the welfare, health and safety of students are good. Arrangements to safeguard and promote students' well-being are suitable and teaching and care staff are clear about their responsibilities in this respect. All the required policies are in place including those for child protection, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, the prevention of bullying and for first aid. All appropriate checks of staff are completed and they are trained appropriately in relation to child protection and first aid. Policies and procedures relating to the prevention of fire are established, supported by guidance and supervision from the CastleCare group. The deployment of staff to provide proper supervision of students has been improved since the last inspection and now meets the requirements fully. Admissions and attendance registers are maintained meticulously. The wide range of sporting and physical activities and the high quality of meals provided encourage students to develop positive attitudes to their health. They enjoy opportunities provided for preparing and cooking their own food. There are suitable arrangements to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school has completed thorough checks on all staff. Records of checks undertaken, including all the required supporting information, are kept in a single central register as required.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The premises and accommodation are good in all respects. They provide safe and suitable facilities for education as well as a homely environment. The buildings are maintained in a clean and hygienic state and are well decorated. Classrooms provide positive learning environments, supported by the good use of display to reinforce learning. They are suitably furnished with regard to the ages of the students. Careful attention has been given to all matters relating to safety, including ease of evacuation of the building in an emergency. Suitable outside space is available with well-chosen playground equipment to ensure that students stay safe. Good use is made of the surrounding countryside for outdoor activities. Facilities for students who are ill have been improved and now meet requirements.

Provision of information

The school provides parents, carers and placing local authorities with all the required information in its prospectus and in other documentation. Appropriate information about students' statements is provided to local authorities each month for the purpose of their annual review. The provision of information has improved since the last inspection.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The policy for handling complaints meets the regulations in full, including the elements with respect to the residential care of students which was highlighted by the last inspection as being incomplete.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The care provision was judged to be good. 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 all The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'). 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.

- Provide opportunities for learning support assistants to be more involved in planning for learning.
- Increase the extent of self-assessment by 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	Children's home		
Date school opened	September 2006		
Age range of pupils	8–17		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees (boarders)	£243,224		
Email address	rburrows@castlehomes.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Marion Paige		
Proprietor	Castle Care		