

# The Corner House

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Sue Aldridge
Social care inspector	Suzanne Young

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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.<sup>1, 2</sup>

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 Corner House is an independent residential special school situated in the grounds of a registered children's home which opened in March 2009. The school aims to provide a caring learning environment where students are supervised, happy and well motivated. Currently there are two students on roll, both of whom have statements of special educational needs that describe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school is registered to take students in the age range nine to 18 years. Both of the current students are in the Key Stage 4 age range. This is the school's first education inspection since it was registered in November 2009. A short ('random') inspection of how well the residential provision keeps children safe was conducted by an Ofsted social care inspector at the same time as this education inspection. As a result, this report does not provide an overall judgement on boarding. The previous care inspection took place in December 2010, when the overall effectiveness of the boarding provision was judged to be good.

## **Evaluation of the school**

The Corner House provides a good quality of education and it meets its aims well. Its success lies in its positive, caring atmosphere, effective collaboration between education and care staff and the seamless way in which both contribute to students' learning. A good range of learning experiences is provided and teaching is successful in enabling students to make good progress in both their personal and academic development. Arrangements for safeguarding students are good. The school meets all but one of the education regulations.

## **Quality of education**

The quality of the curriculum is good; it includes all the required areas of learning and is well matched to students' ages, abilities and interests. There are suitable

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

schemes of work from which lessons are planned. The curriculum content for each student is highly individualised and reflects very closely the needs described on statements of special educational needs. Subjects are linked together effectively to make learning meaningful and enjoyable and so students are well engaged in education, which represents a significant improvement from their previous learning. Themed days are well planned to include a range of memorable activities, jointly organised and delivered by the home and school. For instance, a 'North America' day started with the singing of the national anthem and was followed by a series of activities including reading a Martin Luther King speech, making dream catchers and building tepees. Breakfast, lunch and the evening meal were typically American. Opportunities for developing and consolidating literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are woven naturally into projects. When planning a birthday celebration, students calculate costs of shopping, follow instructions to design and make healthy snacks of different shapes and use a digital camera to record the work done.

Staff successfully encourage the development of interests and leisure skills, and where students have particular interests these are developed well. For instance, an interest in animal care has led to a qualification in equine care and volunteering at a local animal rescue centre. There is timely contact with Connexions and suitable action planning for the next steps towards students' future aspirations. Suitable work experience is arranged when students are ready for this. The range of accreditation is well selected to meet students' needs and ranges from GCSE courses to The Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network's Transition Challenge.

Teaching and assessment are good and result in students making good progress. Good account is taken of available assessment information when students arrive, although this is often well out-of-date, and samples of work are regularly assessed and used to identify next steps. However, there is no fixed point soon after students arrive when precise levels of attainment are identified and recorded so that the school can calculate the gains made over a period such as a year or a key stage. This makes evaluation of academic progress difficult. The school has developed a tracking grid into which assessment information is to be entered at regular intervals.

The work provided is well matched to students' abilities, providing a challenge as well as opportunities to succeed. Staff know the students very well and have high expectations of good learning behaviour. Students are punctual to lessons, concentrate well on the work they are given and show a willingness to work independently as well as to persevere with more difficult pieces of work. There is a good ratio of adults to students and much individual teaching. Although students ask for help when they need this, they do not rely on adult support.

Education and care staff work effectively as a team. Care staff are well briefed at the morning handover session, so that they are clear about lesson objectives as well as tasks, and resources are prepared and provided for them to use. However, learning objectives are not always precise enough to assist in evaluating learning. Working relationships between adults and students are very good and they contribute to

consistently effective management of students' behaviour. Learning is brought to life by inviting visitors to the school, such as an Indian Muslim who spoke about celebrations of her faith and helped students and staff to dress in saris. There is also effective use of the internet to find information, watch video clips and use online assessment tasks. Learning resources are satisfactory. Although the schoolroom has a computer, the printer and dongle used for internet access belong to the teacher, and this is not ideal. Digital photography is used well to evidence and celebrate achievements.

Lessons end on a positive note; staff and students review learning objectives and record successes. Each day ends with a get-together in which successes are celebrated; in this way all staff are effectively informed about students' performance during the day.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There are many opportunities for students to develop their self-awareness, confidence and self-esteem. Significant gains in their emotional adjustment and sense of well-being are evident in improved behaviour and a reduction in incidents. They understand well the simple rules in the home and school as they are involved in agreeing these. Cultural awareness is encouraged very well through the regular, memorable themed days, when students are exposed to a range of experiences through which they learn about other cultures, countries, faiths and customs. These are effective in building their understanding, tolerance and respect for differences.

Behaviour is good. Students respond positively to the well developed behaviour management systems and enjoy receiving points and vouchers for good behaviour. They are polite and welcoming towards visitors, and proud to share aspects of their life at the school with them. Students are willing to make amends for wrongdoing. Increasingly, students take responsibility for themselves, by opening and maintaining a bank account for example. They also learn to take on major responsibilities, such as caring for a 'cyber baby' for five days.

Students contribute well in the home and the wider communities. They routinely do chores in the home, grow produce for sale at the home's annual day of celebration, care for pets, do voluntary work in the community and raise funds for local and national charities, including those chosen themselves. Students have represented the school at sporting events and in a national forum for looked after children. They steadily learn about how society works and their roles as citizens when they explore local leisure services, recycle and take part in interviews for prospective staff. Although there are limited opportunities for them to learn about local and national government, they know how to lobby and have written to the Prime Minister on the topic of cruelty to animals.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

Arrangements to secure the welfare, health and safety of students are good. The social care inspection found that provision for 'staying safe' is good. A suitable range of up-to-date policies effectively guide this aspect of the work of the setting. Staff and students have taken part in first aid at work training and fire safety and all have a good awareness of the risks and how to minimise these. Staff training in child protection is up to date. Managers are proactive in identifying early which staff need refresher training. Risk assessments are rigorous and wide ranging, with particularly good procedures for assessing the risks presented by individual students and identifying the strategies needed to minimise these. In general, staff encourage healthy and safe practices well, although staff and students do not routinely wear protective clothing in food technology lessons. Students say that they feel safe; they take a good amount of exercise and healthy meals are planned to ensure that all have five portions of fruit and vegetables every day. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended by having a three-year plan showing how it intends to improve access for those with disabilities.

## **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

There are good procedures for checking staff prior to them starting work, and all these are correctly entered in a printable central record.

## **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The premises and accommodation are of good quality; they allow students to learn effectively in a safe and secure environment. The schoolroom, situated in the grounds of the home, offers sufficient space for both the students and staff who gather there for end-of-day meetings. Furniture and fittings are suitable, and there is good natural light from a window on brighter days. However, electric lighting is not ideal as it is provided by spotlights which cast shadows in some parts of the room. The extensive garden offers a variety of environments and ample space for domestic leisure, including quiet and shaded areas. The home has a modern kitchen used for food technology lessons and the dining area and lounge provide additional teaching spaces during the school day. Suitable use is made of off-site facilities such as a swimming pool.

## **Provision of information**

The prospectus provides all the required information and it is up to date. Within this document, there are details of key policies and how they can be requested by parents, including that for safeguarding children. Termly reports on students' progress are informative and give parents and local authorities a clear picture of the progress that is being made. Information is given to local authorities as required prior to annual reviews of statements. Local authorities are also sent an annual account showing income and expenditure in respect of each student.

## **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The school has a suitable complaints policy and procedure which allows for complaints to be investigated thoroughly and fairly. There have been no complaints about education since the school opened.

## **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.<sup>3</sup>

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the quality of education provided (standards in part 1) and must:

- have a framework in place by which performance can be evaluated by reference to either the school's own aims, as provided to parents, and/or by national norms (paragraph 4).

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:

- ensure that there are precise objectives for every lesson so that these can be used to evaluate learning at the end of each session
- make sure that staff and students routinely use protective clothing when food is being prepared
- purchase ICT equipment so that the school is self-sufficient in this respect
- provide fluorescent lighting in the schoolroom so that all areas of the room are evenly lit.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/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

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Independent special		
<b>Date school opened</b>	24 November 2009		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9-18		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 2	Total: 2
<b>Number of boarders</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 2	Total: 2
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 2	Total: 2
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 2	Total: 2
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	£180,000		
<b>Address of school</b>	c/o Head Office, Unit 1, Hawford Business Centre, Hawford, Worcestershire, WR3 7SG		
<b>Telephone number</b>	0844 3551722		
<b>Email address</b>	stephenrintoul@aol.com		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Stephen Rintoul		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Stephen Rintoul		