

# Our Place

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Mark Mumby HMI
Social care inspector	Elaine Cray

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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

Our Place is a children's home, which provides education for boys, and girls aged nine to eighteen years. It caters for pupils who have severe learning difficulties. The school aims to, 'create a supportive and nurturing environment that encourages and promotes communication, positive behaviour patterns, cooperation and mutual respect'. The school opened in November 2010 and is registered for four pupils. There are currently four full-time pupils on roll, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. This is the school's first published education inspection report by Ofsted.

The school has requested a material change to increase the registered number of pupils from four to eight. This change was considered as part of this inspection.

## Evaluation of the school

The overall quality of education is satisfactory. The school is successful in its aim of creating, 'a supportive and nurturing environment that encourages and promotes communication, positive behaviour patterns, cooperation and mutual respect'. Safeguarding procedures are robust and the school meets all but one of the regulations for registration as an independent school. The material change to admit up to eight pupils is recommended by the inspection team.

## Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is broad and balanced, including all of the required areas of learning. It is suitably planned to meet the needs of the pupils. It is underpinned by the National Curriculum and is delivered through a thematic approach. The written curriculum policy is supported with detailed plans and

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

schemes of work. There is an appropriate emphasis on developing pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and information communication technology as well as their physical skills. Opportunities for physical development are enhanced through off-site visits for swimming, horse riding and leisure activities. Personal, social and health education has a high priority in the curriculum and forms part of the timetable every day for each pupil. It includes life skills such as cooking and domestic activities as well as sex and relationships education. This work contributes to the school's appropriate focus on providing opportunities for pupils to make choices and develop skills of independence. Pupils visit the local community, to go shopping, for example, but opportunities to develop their cultural understanding or to engage with the wider community more extensively are limited.

The curriculum meets the needs of individual pupil's statements of special educational needs well. For example, there is a clear focus on a highly structured, visually orientated environment using recognised teaching methods in communication for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. There are opportunities for pupils to undertake Assessment and Qualification Alliance (AQA) unit-based level qualifications and Oxford, Cambridge and RSA examinations (OCR) courses at Key Stages 3 and 4, and post-16.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory and pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils are taught mainly in classes of two. Lessons are planned well in short blocks in order to maintain pupils' engagement in their learning. Teachers select activities and resources, which engage the pupils' interests. For example, pupils respond well to using the touch-screen to select answers and appreciate seeing their work printed out instantly and put into their well-ordered folders. Teachers mostly use assessment well during lessons to monitor learning and to move activities on before pupils begin to lose interest. On these occasions, transitions are smooth and the pace of learning is good. However, learning time is sometimes lost because teachers keep one child waiting while another has gone off task or taken time out for a toilet visit. On other occasions, the pace of learning slows because activities are allowed to continue for too long and pupils lose interest. For example, when reviewing an individual's work at the end of a short session, another loses interest. Pupils arrive at the school using a variety of different forms of sign language. The school focuses on using a particular system, but not all staff are skilled in its use. Consequently, there is not a consistent system of signing in use. Nevertheless, teachers and other adults are very focused on developing pupils' verbal language skills and pupils successfully make good progress in developing spoken language. However, occasionally opportunities are missed to challenge pupils to reach their potential when encouraging them to speak.

The school makes suitable baseline assessments four weeks into a pupil's placement. Progress is reviewed at three-monthly intervals when reports are prepared. All pupils are currently assessed using P scales and National Curriculum levels where appropriate. However, the school does not have a suitable system to evaluate pupils' performance and compare this with its own aims or national norms.

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

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There is a good level of respect between adults and the pupils who clearly enjoy the wide range of activities on offer. Rules are clear and pupils are fully involved in selecting rewards that they work towards at the end of sessions. Consequently, they gain a good understanding about what is expected, the difference between right and wrong, and they feel valued as they enjoy the rewards, which they have selected.

Pupils develop a satisfactory understanding of the wider world and receive appropriate preparation for their future lives through activities to develop their life skills. For example, they go out into the community on educational visits and are able to select and pay for items when they go shopping. Pupils contribute to the school community and develop their own skills through undertaking tasks within the school such as planting bulbs and shrubs in the school garden and recycling classroom waste. They support people less fortunate than themselves by creating harvest baskets to be sent into the community via the local church and by sending gifts to children around the world through Operation Christmas Child. There are only limited opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of different cultures. Nevertheless, the school is a tolerant and harmonious community.

Pupils' behaviour is good. The school has implemented successful strategies to manage behaviour which have reduced the disruption caused by inappropriate behaviour and increased the amount of purposeful learning time. Incidents that do occur are managed well with minimal disruption to learning. Pupils respond well to the strategy of choosing and earning rewards such as using the trampoline or spending time in the sensory room. They develop good social skills as they eat meals alongside adults who demonstrate good role models. Lunchtimes are calm and sociable as adults converse and support pupils in developing their manners.

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

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. All of the required policies are in place and most are of good quality. For example, the child protection policy provides a good level of detail about procedures with clear guidance for staff about signs to look out for. The designated senior member of staff for child protection has been appropriately trained. There are sufficient qualified first aiders in school and suitable records are kept, although the first aid policy lacks some details, such as the level of incident when an emergency ambulance should be called. The policy for the promotion of positive behaviour is clear and implemented effectively by staff.

The risk assessments that the school has carried out for individuals, the premises and activities are of very good quality. However, systems to monitor the implementation of the school's procedures are not consistently robust. For example, off-site visits are occasionally planned without sufficient consultation with senior staff

to ensure that the comprehensive risk assessment process has been applied to identify and minimise risks to the pupils. Consequently, planned activities have to be changed or cancelled at short notice on occasions.

The school building is newly built in line with building regulations. Regular checks of smoke detectors and fire extinguishers are carried out, and fire procedures are practised. However, the school has been slow to arrange for a professional fire risk assessment to be carried out and this will be completed in the next two weeks.

The school pays very good attention to personal hygiene, ensuring pupils adopt good habits and respecting their dignity. Pupils benefit from using the extensive grounds for physical exercise in addition to the physical education and swimming lessons. The learning environment and school grounds have been appropriately organised to ensure that the pupils are safe. They are very well supervised and respond well to the boundaries set by the school.

The school has prepared a suitable accessibility plan, which meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

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

The school has implemented robust procedures for the recruitment of staff. All of the required checks are carried out on prospective members of staff and others. Record keeping meets the requirements.

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

The school is housed in purpose-built accommodation within extensive grounds. The teaching areas are sufficient for up to eight pupils, therefore, the material change to increase the age range is recommended. Music and sensory rooms enhance the facilities. Washrooms have been appropriately designed in terms of facilities and space to meet the needs of pupils. The accommodation is very new and is maintained in a very clean, tidy and hygienic state. The extensive outdoor area includes large play equipment, extensive grassed areas, facilities for sensory development, gardens and woodland. Pupils also benefit from using facilities off-site for swimming and horse riding.

### **Provision of information**

The school provides parents and carers with all of the required information through a range of comprehensive documentation and an easily accessible website.

Information about pupils' attainment and progress for parents and carers, as well as for the formal review of statements of special educational needs is made available through written reports, which are prepared after the first four weeks of a placement and then every three months. The information about attainment and progress which is included in these reports is not accompanied by sufficient explanation to ensure it can be easily understood by parents and carers.

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

The school has clearly written complaints procedures for pupils and adults, which meet the requirements.

## **Leadership and management of the residential provision**

The care provision was judged to be satisfactory and national minimum standards were not 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.<sup>3</sup>

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

- Put in place a framework by which pupil 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.

- Make more effective use of assessment processes in lessons in order to challenge pupils more, and increase the pace of learning.
- Provide more opportunities to enrich pupils' cultural development.
- Improve the clarity of reports for parents and carers.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/uk/si/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uk/si/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>	Special		
<b>Date school opened</b>	25 November 2010		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–18 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 2	Girls: 2	Total: 4
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 2	Girls: 2	Total: 4
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 2	Girls: 2	Total: 4
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£62540		
<b>Email address</b>	hcee@ourplaceschools.com		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Christine Hart		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Miss Christine Hart		

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



13 October 2011

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Our Place**

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school this week. I enjoyed observing you in lessons and looking at you work.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education, which means that it is doing everything it should do to help you learn. It does some things well. For example, your teachers help you a lot with your behaviour. As a result, your behaviour is good. They also give you a lot of opportunities to learn skills which will be useful when you grow older. For example, you go out to buy things from different shops and also help with recycling at school.

I have asked your school to make some improvements so it can become even better than it is. I have asked the teachers to challenge you a bit more in lessons and also to teach you more about people from different backgrounds. I have also asked the school to make sure that the reports it sends to your parents and carers are easier to understand.

I hope you will all continue to work hard and help your teachers to make your school even better.

With very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mark Mumby  
Her Majesty's Inspector