

School URN 135292

Independent school standard inspection report

DfE registration number	888/6098
Unique Reference Number (URN)	135292
URN for social care	SC030945
Inspection number	385213
Inspection dates	3–4 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Peter Toft
Social care inspector	Graham Robinson

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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 a children's home which provides education for those of its residents who are of compulsory school age. It is owned by NorthernCare which runs a number of children's homes throughout the country. The school was registered in 2002 for up to six girls aged from 11 to 16 years with severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The four students currently on roll are White British. All are looked after and they are funded by local authorities in the north of England and the Midlands. Currently, none has a statement of special educational needs. All have experienced major disruptions to their previous education, including poor attendance and exclusion. The school was last inspected in July 2008 and the care home was last inspected in January 2011. The school has no religious affiliation. It aims to stabilise behaviour, improve the motivation to learn and 'to empower all our young people to become confident and positive about their abilities and their place in society'.

Evaluation of the school

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education and meets its aims; it makes good provision for the curriculum and for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and outstanding provision to promote their welfare, health and safety. The staff are experienced in teaching students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties; they work well as a team to motivate students. They successfully promote students' personal development and behaviour, which are good. Students make satisfactory academic progress. The school has improved since its last inspection and now meets all safeguarding requirements. All of the regulations for continued registration as an independent school are met.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. It is well planned to provide breadth and balance. Provision for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) is good. There is extensive provision within the curriculum to promote healthy living. This includes physical education and tuition in nutrition, avoidance of substance abuse and sex education; this is supported by taught examination courses and visits from external specialists. Clear curriculum policies and detailed schemes of work cover the National Curriculum, except for music, which is not taught. Individual education plans are well grounded in an analysis of the specific needs of each student.

External examination courses are provided in a number of subjects, including the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT. Careers advice is precisely tailored to the needs of each student. Provision throughout the curriculum and in enrichment activities is good in promoting students' personal development, citizenship, individual responsibility, good behaviour, life skills and risk avoidance; it is very well supported by the comprehensive '24-hour curriculum' taught jointly by staff of the care home and the school. Participation in and enjoyment of the activities of this extended curriculum, including vocational and leisure activities carried out in the community are good, despite the reluctance students often display when starting at the school. Subjects are supported by a good level of learning resources, either within the school or by using external facilities, for example, in dance. Provision for practical work in science and design and technology is limited, however.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory overall, and some aspects are good. The staff are unwaveringly cheerful in lessons and very skilful in dealing with the sometimes volatile moods of the students. They are consistently calm yet firm, and use a range of tactics to diffuse any aggression or lack of cooperation, bringing students back to the task at hand or setting a suitable alternative task. This is well supported by the excellent working relationships between the staff of the school and the staff of the care home, and by the trusting relationships they forge with the students. Lessons are planned in detail and are well sequenced to develop knowledge and skills systematically. However, some of the work set in whole-class lessons is too easy for the more able students. This slows their academic progress.

The school makes good use of a published scheme to assess the attainment of students within the core subjects. This gives a clear picture of the levels of the National Curriculum at which students are currently working. This information helps the school set targets for further learning. It is backed up by close observation of students by staff in lessons and regular marking of their work. The information from this marking is generally, but not always, used to plan individualised work in lessons for the students who are attaining at very different levels and to track progress over time in detail in core subjects.

Students make satisfactory, rather than good, progress overall because, in some lessons, the work set is not sufficiently related to the specific needs of each student. Their progress in personal development is good, especially among those who have

been in the school for some time; behaviour is stabilised and students are painstakingly encouraged to cooperate and participate in social activities and learning.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school supports students' development of self-esteem and helps them to demonstrate acceptable behaviour and consideration for others. It encourages healthy living and the avoidance of risks, especially in relation to sexual exploitation. The school encourages participation in school and community activities. Students gain a respect for the law and for people from different cultures. They develop a good understanding of public institutions within our country. Learning within the school is very well supported by the activities which take place within the care home, some of which are jointly planned with staff of the school within the '24-hour curriculum'. It is also well supported by activities in the community. Records kept by the school show the good progress students make over time in adjusting to life within the home and the outside community.

Students are encouraged to participate in the organisation of the school through monthly meetings with staff in which the students' ideas for and about the school are discussed. Students have regular opportunities to make suggestions on the running of the school during formal monthly meetings with staff. They have excellent opportunities throughout the day to socialise and talk informally with staff; this is helped by the small-scale of the school and the warm relationships staff forge with the students. In this way, students develop respect for each other and for adults, and reflect on their lives and moral issues. This is achieved despite the frequent changes in the school roll, as students are admitted to or leave the care home. Staff are vigilant to promote this respect among newcomers. Students feel secure and accepted within the school although they are reluctant to admit that they like school or to display outwardly positive attitudes towards school. Behaviour is generally good, calm in lessons and around the school, and significantly better than in students' previous schools. Attendance is below average but is significantly higher for each student than it was in their previous schools. The curriculum, especially in its promotion of self-esteem, literacy, numeracy, computing skills and careers awareness, helps to prepare students well for the world of work.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision to promote students' welfare, health and safety and safeguarding is outstanding. Procedures for child protection meet requirements and staff are appropriately trained. The school supports the home exceptionally well in helping to promote students' protection. Policies and procedures to achieve these aims are excellent as are the lengths to which staff go to in conducting risk assessments, including those related to behaviour, and in providing care and support. Staff are well trained in these procedures and they cooperate seamlessly to ensure they are successfully implemented; the implementation is well monitored. The supervision of

students on and off the premises is excellent and their attitudes and behaviour are routinely observed and recorded; these records are well used by staff for planning the support for students. Students have an extensive range of opportunities to learn about healthy living, eating, drinking and avoiding substance abuse as well as the avoidance of maltreatment and exploitation. Healthy cookery and shopping are well taught as part of the '24-hour curriculum' and the meals provided are of very good quality, much appreciated by the students. The curriculum and activities give ample opportunities for physical exercise; take-up is high. Admission and attendance registers are kept as required. The school fulfils its duties under the Equalities Act 2010 and has a three-year plan to improve accessibility to the premises.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The suitability of all staff to work with students and children in care has been checked. A clear record of this information is held on a single central register as required.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The classroom has been well designed to provide a good atmosphere for learning. It is decorated to a high standard and its good resources for learning are well organised for students to use. Washroom facilities are suitable and the provision for students who may become sick meets requirements. The school makes very effective use of external facilities for a range of activities including swimming and dance.

Provision of information

Parents, carers and staff in the placing local authorities are given a good range of information on the school through the prospectus and regular documentation and meetings. They are well informed about the progress students are making and their achievements in external examinations through meetings and reports.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's procedures for handling complaints meet the regulations.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

National minimum standards

The care provision was judged to be outstanding and 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.

What the school could do to improve further

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

- develop the regular tracking of students' progress in the core subjects
- use information from marking more consistently to set individualised learning objectives for lessons and units of study so that students of different abilities are always challenged sufficiently by the work
- secure access to specialist laboratory and workshop facilities to promote practical work in science and design and technology.

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	Special school for students with severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
Date school opened	July 2002
Age range of pupils	11–16 years
Gender of pupils	Female
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	4
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils who are looked after	4
Annual fees (day pupils)	£13,000
Telephone number	01524 262210
Head of Education	Mr Tony Rigby
Proprietor	Mr Phillip Holt

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.



7 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of your school

When I visited your school recently, I promised to write to you about how well I think it is doing.

- The quality of education you receive is satisfactory.
- You engage in a good range of interesting and useful subjects and activities which you should find useful in adult life.
- The broad curriculum is well adapted to meet the specific needs of each student.
- The staff provide good opportunities for you to develop personally and become confident adults.
- The school is outstanding in the way it promotes your welfare, health and safety. The staff work very well as a team to keep you safe.
- The staff are very experienced in helping you to improve your behaviour and to learn to see the benefit of succeeding in school.
- The school has improved since its last inspection and the staff are keen to continue with this improvement.
- I have asked the staff to improve the way they mark your work and tailor lessons so that the work set is varied to suit each one of you. I have also asked them to work out how the school can give those who need it access to laboratories and workshops for practical work in science and design and technology.

I enjoyed being with you in my visit. Thank you to those who spoke to me and to the staff for showing me your work. I wish you and the staff all good wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Peter Toft
Lead Inspector