

Appletree School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Christine Inkster HMI
Social care inspector	Graham Robinson HMI

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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

This is an independent special school which is also registered as a children's home. The children's home is located in a small village with a purpose-built school on site. The school extended its facilities for older pupils by the use of additional premises in the town centre in January 2009. This provision is known as 'Next Steps' and provides education for those pupils who are not able to return to day schools. This additional provision has moved to new premises close to another children's home for older pupils owned by Appletree Treatment Centre Ltd. The school is registered for eighteen boys and girls aged from six to sixteen years who experience behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. It opened in November 1995. There are currently 16 pupils on roll aged from seven to fourteen years. Fourteen pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The pupils have had disrupted schooling before they arrive. The school admits pupils from a number of different local authorities and 14 pupils are in the care of a local authority. The school and home aim to support pupils to grow emotionally and socially, to learn to cope with school and to return to families and day schools before they are teenagers. For those who cannot manage this, the school aims to continue to guide and educate them through to young adulthood. The previous inspection of the education provision was in April 2008. The last care inspection of the children's home was in March 2011. An inspection of the care provision was taking place at the same time as this inspection.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of education provided is good and the school successfully meets its aims as most pupils are able to return to day schools. The quality of teaching and assessment is good, enabling pupils to make good progress. The curriculum is good as it is personalised to meet individual pupil's needs. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and, since the last inspection, behaviour has improved and is now good. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils meet

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

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

requirements and the welfare, health and safety of pupils is outstanding. The school is successfully addressing the areas for improvement identified by the last inspection, including making improvements for the provision of information and communication technology (ICT). The school meets all the regulations for registration as an independent school.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. The school provides a personalised learning programme to suit the needs and abilities of each pupil and caters well for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' basic skills which helps to build the foundations for future learning. There are suitable policies and schemes of work for all areas of the National Curriculum and the curriculum is broad and balanced. There are effective long-term and medium-term plans in place which cover all the key skills. Staff take opportunities to develop cross-curricular links where appropriate, for example, one group of pupils were practising their mathematical skills during a physical education lesson. However, opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects are not formally and systematically planned for. There are now more opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their learning and there are plans to extend this provision further.

The curriculum in the 'Next Steps' provision is bespoke for individual pupils and includes, for example, participation in equine therapy and education or attending a local college for training courses. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) has a high priority within the school and does much to address the personal development needs of the pupils. The school effectively implements a programme of social and emotional development. The curriculum is enriched with a range of visits and visitors. For example, there are close links with a local arts centre where pupils participate in dance, drama and art activities as well as multicultural activities. There are a number of after-school clubs run by teaching staff including an art and craft club, guitar club and a walking club. There are close links with the other schools and children's homes owned by Appletree Treatment Centre Ltd and there are a number of joint activities such as a Medieval Awards Ceremony which was held recently. The 24-hour curriculum helps pupils prepare for life outside the home, particularly for pupils in the 'Next Steps' provision, and includes visits to the library and swimming pool, and opportunities to participate in activities which may be of particular interest to them. The care staff support pupils in developing their basic skills by helping them learn spellings and times tables, and also through reading to them.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good and, as a result, pupils make good progress in their learning. This is because teachers use assessment information effectively to plan the next steps in learning for individual pupils. Teachers carefully take into account the prior learning of their pupils when planning lessons, ensuring that any gaps in knowledge or understanding of particular concepts are addressed. While staff give good support to pupils when needed, they also provide good

opportunities for independent learning. Pupils are well motivated and are able to concentrate on a task until it is completed in most cases. Attention is paid to developing speaking and listening skills and pupils' contributions to discussions are thoughtful and valued by staff. Staff have good subject knowledge and use a variety of different strategies and activities to make the lessons enjoyable for pupils. Staff ask good, probing questions which enable pupils to develop their thinking skills effectively. There are good relationships between staff and pupils and, as a result, pupils engage well in their lessons. Pupils' work is marked regularly and there are comments identifying what pupils have done well and also where they can improve on their work. Pupils are involved in assessing their own work and that of their peers which helps pupils to take ownership of their learning. They are aware of their individual learning targets as well as those for behaviour and know what they have to do to achieve them.

Pupils make good progress overall from their individual starting points, but progress is more rapid in writing and mathematics than in reading. This is because reading resources do not fully meet the needs and interests of all pupils and there are not always enough opportunities for them to practise their reading skills at school and in the children's home.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils say they enjoy school and their attendance is high. They have very positive attitudes to learning and are keen to do their best. There is a very strong focus on developing pupils' confidence and self-esteem and in fostering their emotional life and relationships both in school and the children's home. Pupils are able to distinguish between right and wrong and are encouraged to take responsibility for, and understand the consequences of, their behaviour. As a result, their behaviour is now good.

There is very good provision for developing pupils' cultural awareness through celebrating different festivals and becoming involved in activities such as multicultural dance and music which does much to promote their tolerance and understanding of those from different backgrounds to their own. This was evident when pupils explained their understanding of racism during a PSHE lesson. Pupils' spiritual awareness is promoted through learning about other religions and through links with the local church. They learn about public services and institutions in England through discussing events such as elections and the role of government. Pupils make a strong positive contribution by becoming involved in fundraising activities for a variety of charities, making decisions through the school council such as contributing their ideas for the multi-use games area and, for example, through sponsoring a child in Afghanistan through Action Aid. Pupils are developing their basic skills effectively and, through the 24-hour curriculum, are learning independence and life skills which prepare them very well for their future education and lives. As a result, most pupils are able to return to day schools.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school makes outstanding provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils. The school is very proactive in developing links with other organisations and agencies to help to cater for pupils' very specific needs. As a result, pupils' behavioural, social and emotional needs are met very well through a wide range of therapeutic and clinical support services such as play and art therapy, counselling services, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy. Programmes of activities to support these needs are implemented very effectively by school and care staff.

There is a range of very comprehensive and detailed written policies for all aspects of welfare, health and safety which are implemented very effectively. There are rigorous systems in place to ensure that all staff receive up-to-date safeguarding and child protection training. Several staff have undertaken safer recruitment training. In addition to all staff receiving first aid training, there is also a qualified nurse on site. Comprehensive risk assessments are carried out, particularly to ensure the safety of pupils on educational visits and within the school grounds and buildings. Detailed fire risk assessments have been carried out, fire prevention equipment is monitored and regular drills are held and documented. The school fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010. The school encourages pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles and pupils choose to eat healthily and participate in a wide range of sporting activities. There is a physical education lesson each day for younger pupils. Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe, particularly when, for example, using the internet. They are aware of what they should do if they have a worry or concern, for example, in respect of bullying, as shown by their very thoughtful responses during a PSHE lesson during anti-bullying week.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school undertakes the full range of required checks, including Criminal Records Bureau checks, to ensure the suitability of staff prior to appointment. The required information is held on a single central register which meets requirements.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school is situated adjacent to the children's home in an attractive rural setting. The school was built approximately 10 years ago. The classrooms are well decorated and have attractive displays which provide a stimulating environment for pupils. There are three classrooms of an appropriate size, one of which has a multi-purpose function, for example, being used as an ICT suite, music room and for the delivery of individual or small group sessions, such as speech therapy. There is a staff room with a kitchen which is used for aspects of design and technology such as cookery. The grounds are attractive with a multi-use games area and playground. There is a grassed area for games. The 'Next Steps' provision has appropriate accommodation to educate a small number of pupils. However, most of the five older pupils attend other settings such as a local college or participate in activities on other sites.

Provision of information

The school provides parents, carers and others with the required information through the prospectus and an attractive website. Regular newsletters are produced detailing the range of activities in which pupils participate and celebrating any achievements. There are detailed annual written reports which give good information on pupils' progress.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a policy and set of procedures which meet regulations.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The care provision was judged to be good, 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.

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

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 pupils make more progress in their reading through providing additional resources and ensuring there are many more opportunities to practise their reading skills both within the school and care provision.
- Improve the curriculum by planning specific opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in literacy and numeracy across all subjects.

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	Pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties		
Date school opened	November 1995		
Age range of pupils	6–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 10	Girls: 6	Total: 16
Number of boarders	Boys: 10	Girls: 6	Total: 16
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 9	Girls: 5	Total: 14
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 9	Girls: 5	Total: 14
Annual fees (day pupils)	£61,437		
Annual fees (boarders)	£141,585		
Email address	admin@appletreeschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Rob Davies		
Proprietor	Appletree Treatment Centre Ltd		

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.



18 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Appletree School

Thank you very much for the warm welcome that you gave the inspectors when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our visit very much and are very grateful for the time you spent talking to us. I would like to share with you what we found out.

- Your school is a good school and you make good progress in your learning because teaching and the curriculum are good.
- You are good at assessing your own work and that of your friends.
- All staff care about you very much indeed and they work very hard to make sure that they help each one of you as best they can and keep you safe and healthy.
- Your behaviour was good in the lessons seen, although I know you said you would sometimes like other pupils to work more quietly to help you concentrate more.
- You are making very good progress in your personal development and most of you go on to other schools when you are ready to do so.
- I was impressed by the answers some of you gave when the adults asked you questions in lessons.

All schools need to improve and so I have asked that both the care and education staff help you to make more progress in your reading and provide books for you that you will find fun to read. I have also asked them to help you practise your reading, writing and mathematical skills in other subjects so that you get even better at doing these things. It is very important that you learn these skills so that you will have a good future. Thank you for all your help. You should be very proud of yourselves. I wish you much success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Christine Inkster
Her Majesty's Inspector