

Hythe House Education

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	David 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.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Hythe House Education is an independent day special school in the ownership of Hythe House Support Ltd, a fostering agency based in Sittingbourne. Opened in 2003, the school is located in a spacious three-storey detached house in Sheerness, on the Isle of Sheppey, Kent.

The school provides education for boys and girls aged between 11 and 16 years who experience emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. Many of the students have a history of disrupted schooling. Some students have additional learning difficulties and two have statements of special educational needs. There are currently seven students on roll, five of whom are girls. All students are in the care of social services and live in foster placements arranged by Hythe House. Their places are funded by their local authorities.

The school seeks to offer a broad and balanced curriculum which enables students to experience a rewarding level of achievement. Staff seek to build a trusting relationship with each student by providing high levels of individual support designed to improve their behaviour and social skills. Where appropriate, students are considered for return to mainstream school. The school was last inspected in June 2008.

Evaluation of the school

Hythe House continues to provide a good quality of education and meets its aims for both the academic and personal development of its students. The curriculum and planning for learning have been carefully constructed to meet the needs of each individual student. As a result, students make at least good progress with their learning. They make very good progress in their personal development and their behaviour is outstanding. Arrangements for the safeguarding and welfare of students are good. The school has responded appropriately to the one regulatory failure at the time of the previous inspection and all regulations are now met.

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

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

Quality of education

The school provides a good curriculum which broadly reflects the structure of the National Curriculum. All required areas of learning are experienced by students and they are well prepared for life after school. One outstanding strength of the curriculum is the way in which teaching is organised to meet the individual needs of each student throughout all subjects studied. Student groupings are varied effectively, depending on the subjects being studied and the level of challenge in the planned learning. At the end of Key Stage 4, students are appropriately provided with the opportunity to enter for GCSE accreditation in an increasing number of subjects. The current students in Year 10 are preparing for examinations in English, mathematics, science, history, art and design technology. Alternative accreditation through Entry Level Certificates and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) bronze and silver awards is sensitively provided where this is most appropriate, based on the prior attainment of students. Appropriate work experience is provided for all students during Year 11, using local employers sympathetic to the aims of the school, and students receive suitable support and careers advice through the local Connexions service. Students appreciate the 'Values' (personal, social, health and citizenship) sessions in their weekly timetables and these are enhanced by meaningful, well-organised theme weeks each term. Good quality displays about healthy eating, different genres of music and cultural diversity, resulting from the most recent themes, provide stimulating and interesting evidence of students' achievements.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good, and within this, procedures for the assessment of students' progress are outstanding. The quality of teaching varies from satisfactory to outstanding; overall, it is good. Outstanding lessons are characterised by clear, precise objectives shared with the students, and achieved through well-structured activities which interest and engage students. Students know what is expected of them and expectations for the standard of work are high. The teachers and support assistants provide excellent challenge, often through carefully focused questions which require students to think and work out answers for themselves. Where teaching is satisfactory, the same quality of planning and in-class support are in place, but students are not always clear about exactly what they are expected to do and what the intended outcomes are. At times, the teacher's voice is too prominent and the purposes of discussion are insufficiently clear to students. As a result of these features, the pace of lessons and the amount of learning achieved is variable. While resources for learning are appropriate, insufficient use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) to provide stimulating visual images and to ensure that students make regular use of a variety of computer software to enhance their learning. The school improvement plan recognises that this is an area for development. Overall, students are provided with a high level of intellectual challenge, interesting practical activities, and learning which is highly appropriate to their individual needs. The quality of the curriculum and the manner in which it is organised ensure that the requirements of students' statements of special educational needs are fully implemented.

Arrangements for the assessment of students' progress are comprehensive, systematic and highly appropriate. Students understand the assessment programme in each subject and the resultant grades and National Curriculum levels. They are aware of the level at which they are currently working and of their targets for improvement. They are motivated by the information provided and proud to recognise the progress which they are making with their learning. Overall, students' progress is good. GCSE grades in English and mathematics in the last two years demonstrate good, and sometimes outstanding, progress from very varied starting points on entry to the school. The students currently in the school have all made good progress with their reading, spelling and numeracy, in addition to the new knowledge, skills and understanding evident across the full range of subjects studied. Over time, the school is compiling an effective record of progress data which celebrates the success of the learning experienced by the students.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. Students enter the school with a disrupted experience of education and often with significant weaknesses in their personal management of their behaviour and in their attitudes towards school. The quality of relationships and the effective role models provided by adults encourage students to aspire to personal growth. Students make very good progress in the management of their interactions with staff and with each other. As a result, behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding. The 'Values' lessons and the excellent structured use of daily tutor time encourage students to take part and share their experiences in a mature manner. They understand the importance of making the correct decisions and ensuring that other people's needs are considered. Students state that they enjoy school and their good attendance is clear testimony to this.

Students willingly take on responsibility through a daily rota of tasks which contribute to the smooth running of the school. They take part in collections for charities, including Red Nose Day and a Christmas 'shoe box appeal'. The points reward system is appreciated by students and they are keen to discover their weekly totals. The resultant leisure time trips provide appropriate reward and underpin a sense of achievement for hard-earned points. Theme weeks and aspects of the 'Values' curriculum, in particular, provide students with opportunities to develop an understanding of what it means to be a good citizen and experiences of cultural diversity in the local and global communities. Students are provided with satisfactory opportunities to consider different cultural and faith perspectives but nevertheless, chances are missed which would provide broader understanding.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of students are good. Students state that they feel safe in the school and they recognise that the school teaches them to live healthy lives. Effective policies are in place and implemented consistently for the

management of behaviour, ensuring there is no bullying and for the safety of students on visits out of school. Staff are appropriately trained in child protection and integrated protection procedures operate effectively across the school and the foster settings in which all the students live. Update training for all staff is planned to be undertaken later this month. A commercial company has been employed to produce a comprehensive fire risk assessment and appropriate action has been taken to address any risks. Routine checks are undertaken and recorded on all aspects of fire safety. While appropriate policies are in place for all required aspects of students' welfare, health and safety, there are no formal procedures to ensure that policies are regularly reviewed to ensure compliance with current legislation. The school has produced an accessibility plan which meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All the required checks on the suitability of staff and proprietors are completed appropriately in line with the school's recruitment policy. Details of all checks are recorded in a suitable single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school premises provide a safe and effective environment for learning. Classrooms are of appropriate size for the small classes and specialist facilities are well used for the teaching of art, design and technology, ICT and art. The school makes good use of local sports facilities and provides suitable space for indoor games and recreation which are valued by the students. There is sufficient outdoor space for relaxation and recreation. A washbasin has been installed in the room to be used by any student who may be ill, rectifying the one regulatory failure at the time of the last inspection.

Provision of information

The school prospectus, which is provided for all parents and carers, gives details of the availability of all the required school policies. Information is up-to-date and supplemented by an annual communication summarising the results of examinations for school leavers. Suitable reports on the progress of students in all subjects are sent home twice each year.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's arrangements for the management of any complaints meet regulatory requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Increase the use of ICT in order to:
 - improve the impact and quality of visual images in teaching and learning
 - ensure that students develop confidence in the use of a variety of computer software.
- Ensure that a greater variety of cultural contexts and faith perspectives are experienced throughout the curriculum.
- Ensure that all written policies are regularly reviewed.

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	Day special school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties		
Date school opened	January 2003		
Age range of pupils	11–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 2	Girls: 5	Total: 7
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 1	Girls: 1	Total: 2
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 2	Girls: 5	Total: 7
Annual fees (day pupils)	£25,577		
Address of school	19 Marine Parade Sheerness Kent ME12 2AP		
Telephone number	01795 581006		
Email address	robertduffy@hythehousesupport.co.uk		
Headteacher	Alix Wilson		
Proprietor	Hythe House Support 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.



7 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Hythe House Education, Sheerness ME12 2AP

I would like to thank you for the way that you welcomed us to your school when we visited recently. We were particularly pleased to join you in some of your lessons and to have the opportunity to talk with you about your school. Thank you, too, for completing the questionnaires. The inspection judged that Hythe House provides you with a good quality of education and helps you to develop as mature young people. We were particularly pleased to see:

- that your questionnaires show that you enjoy school, feel safe and appreciate the quality of teaching you receive
- the way in which you concentrate and work hard throughout the school day
- the outstanding way in which you behave and join in all activities, and share your ideas with each other and with the staff
- so many good and outstanding lessons in which the activities have been carefully chosen to make sure that you can all make good progress
- the progress you make with your reading and writing, and the success which you achieve in examinations.

To make sure that the school continues to provide you with a high quality of education, we have asked the headteacher and staff to make more use of ICT in lessons, and to make sure that you have more opportunities to learn about a variety of different cultures and faiths. All of you can continue to make the school successful by making sure you continue to achieve good grades in your assessments and earn a large number of points for your behaviour and contribution to the school.

Yours sincerely

David Young
Lead inspector