

The Ryes College and Community

Independent school standard inspection report

DfE registration number	881/6033
Unique Reference Number (URN)	115427
Inspection number	385154
Inspection dates	13–14 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Judith Charlesworth

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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

The Ryes College and Community caters for boys and girls with complex special educational needs. Most students have autistic spectrum disorder and all have learning, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A few students have medical needs which additionally affect their learning and behaviour. All students have a statement of special educational needs and live in the organisation's children's homes. There are currently nine boys and one girl aged 14 to 17 years on roll, four of whom were admitted in September 2011.

The school is part of an Organisation which took over ownership from the previous proprietors in April 2011. A lengthy period of reorganisation, staff redundancy and restructuring has since taken place. The directors closed one of the Organisation's two schools in July 2011. In September 2011, it took up tenancy of new premises to provide additional accommodation for its remaining Pump Farm school. This school opened in 2008 and is registered for eight students aged 11 to 18. This inspection includes a review of whether the new premises are fit for purpose, and whether together, the two sites can provide effectively for up to 24 students aged 11 to 18 years.

Pump Farm school was last inspected in September 2009 when it was found to be inadequate in all aspects. The school received progress monitoring visits in April and November 2010, and May 2011. Following a period of unsettled leadership, the current headteacher took up her post in December 2010.

The school's main aim is: 'To provide the best possible education and support for students to equip them with a greater understanding of the world and themselves so that they may take their rightful place in society and be prepared for useful and rewarding lives.'

Evaluation of the school

The Ryes College and Community school provides good quality education. It has improved greatly since its last inspection, effectively meets its stated aims, and all regulations are now met. The good curriculum, teaching and assessment, underpinned by the school's drive to improve students' future life prospects, enable them to make good academic progress. The provision for students' spiritual, moral,

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

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

social and cultural development is outstanding. Students' behaviour and personal development are outstanding; they enjoy school and their attendance is high. Provision for students' health, safety and welfare is good and safeguarding arrangements are robust. The school's proposal to take on additional premises to supplement that at Pump Farm and admit up to 24 students is recommended.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. It is designed to help students re-engage with learning by providing a broad range of subjects and activities that are presented in ways that are interesting to students and promote their future well-being. It is well supported by very good use of the community to provide opportunities for students to learn and to contribute in return. Every subject is underpinned by the intention to improve students' personal development, self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities, and to promote their understanding of diversity and equality. All the required areas of learning and subjects are included in the curriculum. These are supported by suitable planning to ensure that students systematically fill in gaps in their learning and make good progress.

Wherever possible, curriculum subjects lead to accreditation. This supports students' self-esteem and future prospects. A wide range of nationally accredited courses is provided, among which are: awards in life skills, employability, community work, horticulture and GCSEs. Students attending college also gain accreditation, for example in motor mechanics and catering. The curriculum is appropriate to the aptitudes, needs and interests of individual students. Each student has a personally designed key skills programme derived from their statement objectives. These are reviewed and evaluated as part of the annual review process. Additionally, personalised subject targets are set for each individual in each subject.

Vocational and enterprise education are increasingly strong foci of the curriculum as the school sees these as important to students' future well-being. The new premises are ideal for teaching the academic subjects, and complement the Pump Farm site in its provision for practical activities. Horticulture and animal husbandry are expanding areas of the vocational education. The school is currently working to extend the range of accreditation offered in this area.

Teaching and assessment are good. Both have been very considerably improved by strong, effective leadership and management which have resulted in the introduction of new approaches and professional rigour to all aspects of the provision. Key strengths in teaching are outstanding relationships between staff and students; the personal coaching approach which enables immediate, ongoing assessment for learning; and students' positive attitudes, behaviour, enjoyment and motivation to participate. Gentle but probing questioning throughout lessons assesses and draws out pupils' understanding. In the small number of less effective lessons, students were not given enough opportunity to contribute independently, and explanations about concepts were not clear enough. Although students were compliant and willing to learn, they were unable to do so to the same extent as in other lessons.

Assessment is increasingly informing teaching, the curriculum and records of students' progress. Subject targets and targets from students' individual learning programmes are incorporated into all lessons. Assessment forms part of lesson plan evaluations and students' daily points awards. Good systems have been established to evaluate students' work against national criteria and in relation to their own targets. The school is using performance data to track individuals' progress. However, it is not yet used as a management tool to contribute to evaluations of the quality of provision or to inform management decisions.

The good quality provision enables students to make good academic progress. Attainment on entry is usually very low in relation to expectations for students' ages. By the end of Year 11, most have gained a range of accreditation that exceeds expectations considering their starting points.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is a remarkable turn-around from the time of the last inspection when all aspects were judged to be inadequate. Discussion, observation and inspection questionnaire returns indicate that students enjoy school. On entry, students generally have very low spirits, confidence and self-esteem. This is very often manifested in angry, violent outbursts. However, students' personal development improves considerably due to the excellent support and guidance they receive. Their attitudes to learning improve rapidly and are outstanding in class. This is demonstrated in students' enthusiasm for their work and activities. For example, one student could not wait to show the inspector his chickens and explain how he looked after them. Others asked the inspector to sample food they had cooked, and were appropriately friendly, humorous and relaxed during the interaction. Attendance this term is high with half the students having 100% attendance.

Behaviour is outstanding. Students have a very good understanding of right and wrong in the school context and wider community. Through the curriculum and robust school reward and sanction systems, students understand that all actions have consequences. They have set their own 'Charter for Learning'. Records show that incidents decrease markedly the longer students are at the school. Students are spontaneously supportive and encouraging of each other. For example, one student encouraged another to come on the ice skating visit that took place during the inspection, saying that she would help him. Students are very well prepared for their future economic well-being. They make good academic progress and outstanding progress in their personal development. They understand the need to have a future to look forward to, and some have an idea of the careers they might follow.

Students' contribution to the community is outstanding. This is a very strong focus of the curriculum aimed at promoting students' personal development. Students contribute to the school, local, national and global communities. For example, in the past year, they have picked up litter and sorted it for recycling; organised events and raised money for charities; contributed to the local conservation projects and contributed to special forums at a national level. Students' opinions are frequently

sought and they participate regularly in decision-making, including having an input into staff appointments. The students have been fully involved in the school's work towards gaining the International Schools, Eco and Equality and Diversity awards. This has made an outstanding contribution to their personal development.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good. Most policies and practices extend across both sites, but some, such as risk assessments, are appropriately location-specific. The previous inspection found many inadequacies in this area but the school has worked successfully to improve it. All regulations are now met on both sites. The provision for the welfare, health and safety of students on the new site is good.

Policies and procedures are clear and underpin good practice, for example, in safeguarding, and educational visits off-site. Child protection procedures are effective. All required staff training, such as for child protection, fire safety and first aid is up to date. Regular checks are made in relation to health and safety and both sites are fully compliant. Records of these checks and other aspects, such as incidents, accidents, restraints and sanctions are appropriately made and monitored. Nevertheless, the Organisation's re-structuring has left this area vulnerable; the new lines of accountability for monitoring and evaluating practice and ensuring full compliance with the regulations are not yet clearly defined. The school has a disability access policy, and suitable access plans for both sites, as required by the Equality Act 2010.

The staff show outstanding care and concern for the welfare and well-being of each individual student. Close partnerships with the children's homes ensure that students attend school regularly. Behaviour management was found to be inadequate in the previous inspection. It is now outstanding on both sites, underpinned by clear, well-implemented and understood reward and sanctions systems, and outstanding relationships between staff and students. Consequently, students thrive and enjoy school, and their behaviour is outstanding. Students behave safely in class and say that they feel safe in school. Bullying is a rare occurrence and students have signed up to the Anti-Bullying Alliance's anti-bullying charter. They have a clear understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle although some do not always choose the right options.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All the required checks are made to ensure the suitability of adults, including the proprietors, to work with children. They are recorded as required.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The accommodation at Pump Farm has been improved since the previous inspection and now meets requirements. The premises' use has changed since the school has

taken on the new property. It is now used for practical work only. This includes design and technology, art, and food technology. Pump Farm is set in extensive grounds which provides very well for vocational curricular activities such as chicken farming and horticulture.

The new premises are of good quality. They were formerly a small single-storey business unit organised in two wings, situated in its own grounds. One wing is used by the school. The other wing is currently used for meetings and the Organisation's administration. All the appropriate checks were made prior to tenancy, including the wiring, water and drainage. The school is tidy, clean and hygienic. It is well-furnished and looks fresh and attractive. A gravelled outside area with wooden garden furniture is available for students' use. There are sufficient washrooms for students and staff, and staff have a good-sized workroom. This site is mostly used for classroom-based work, such as literacy, numeracy and science. However, there is a small kitchen for food technology and an all-purpose room for practical activities, such as floristry. Classrooms vary in size from small to very large but are all adequate for small group and one-to-one teaching. The common room is small, and will not be big enough when numbers increase. However, there is plenty of scope for changing the use of rooms, and for incorporating additional rooms in the second wing into the school's use, as is planned.

The new premises supplement those already used at Pump Farm effectively and all regulations are met. Together, the premises will provide suitable accommodation and space for a broad curriculum for up to 24 students aged 11 to 18 years.

Provision of information

The information provided for parents, carers and others is clear, accurate and up to date. This aspect has improved since the previous inspection and all regulations are now met. Detailed annual written reports on students' progress are completed by each subject teacher. They include information about students' attainment, progress and accreditation level in each subject, and give subject targets for the forthcoming year. Good, detailed and relevant information is provided to local authorities for annual reviews of students' statements of special educational needs.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a suitable policy and procedures which meet 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').

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Draw up clear lines of accountability for monitoring and evaluating practice and ensuring full compliance with the regulations.
- Use students' progress data to contribute to evaluations of the quality of provision and to inform management decisions.

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		
Date school opened	2008		
Age range of pupils	11 to 18 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 9	Girls: 1	Total: 10
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 9	Girls: 1	Total: 10
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 9	Girls: 1	Total: 10
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,544		
Address of school	Aldham Business Centre New Road Colchester CO6 3PN		
Telephone number	01206 243473		
Email address	jackie.shanks@theryescollege.org.uk		
Headteacher	Jackie Shanks		
Proprietor	The Ryes College and Community		

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.

15 December 2011

Dear Students



Inspection of The Ryes College and Community, Colchester, CO6 3PN

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I really enjoyed talking to you and watching how well you were learning and participating in your lessons and activities. Thank you, also, for the delicious mince pies and lunch that you made for me, and for the festive table decoration.

I came to the school to see how well you were all doing and how happy you were. I found that The Ryes College provides you with good quality education, and its provision for your personal development is outstanding. Consequently you make good academic progress and outstanding progress in your personal development. These are some of the best aspects of The Ryes College:

- its success in helping you to be happier and more settled
- your excellent behaviour and positive attitudes to your work and activities
- the outstanding relationships you have with the staff
- your high rate of attendance
- the quality of teaching and the commitment staff have to your progress and well-being
- the quality of the leadership.

I have asked the school to do two things to become even better. These are:

- to develop what staff do with the assessment data on your progress in order to help them to identify improvements needed
- to make sure that the leaders and managers in the school and organisation all know exactly who is responsible for checking that all the systems and practices are running smoothly.

You can help, too, by continuing to behave well, try hard and aim high.

I hope that you all enjoyed your ice skating trip at the Tower of London and I wish you all the best for 2012 and for the future.

Yours sincerely
Judith Charlesworth
Lead inspector

