

Access School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Susan Lewis

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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

Access School is a small independent special school set within the grounds of a farm, on the outskirts of Wem in North Shropshire. It admits up to 16 pupils aged five to 16 years with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Pupils often join the school after a history of exclusion or long-term absence from mainstream or other special school provision. The school was registered in 2000 at its original site in Shrewsbury and relocated to this site in 2003. It was last inspected in July 2008 and had a progress monitoring visit in February 2009. Although the proprietor is an individual, the school is part of a broader organisation, Family Care Associates Limited which provides residential care and fostering services. At the time of this inspection there were 12 pupils on roll aged eight to 16 years, including two girls. Nine pupils have statements of special educational needs. The pupils come from several different local authorities across the country. Seven are looked after children in foster care or resident in a Family Care Associates home or those of other independent providers. The school aims to provide 'Excellent teaching, care and support to ensure realistic educational progress, opportunities and life chances.'

Evaluation of the school

The school provides a good quality of education and meets its aims successfully. Pupils at each Key Stage make good progress because of good teaching and the ways in which the good curriculum motivates them to attend more regularly than they have done before. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good and their behaviour is satisfactory. Nonetheless consistent management of behaviour and careful attention to each individual's behaviour plan ensure pupils make good progress in their ability to manage their behaviour for themselves. The provision for pupils' welfare health and safety is good and safeguarding arrangements comply with all requirements. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and now meets all but three of the regulations.

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, with particular strengths in the provision for English, mathematics, science and humanities. A wide programme of outdoor activities and visits, and subjects such as land use, enrich the curriculum and enthuse pupils. The well balanced programme has a highly relevant emphasis on improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills as quickly as possible. There are good opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills in the different subjects taught. Pupils' confidence in reading and willingness to write and 'have a go' at challenging work improves considerably. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to extend and use their computer skills in subjects, although whenever pupils do have access to such equipment their learning and behaviour in lessons is good.

The school has widened the range of accredited qualifications it has in place since the last inspection and extended these into Key Stage 3. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 are extremely proud of the progress they are making in subjects like history, science, English and mathematics and are excited by the qualifications at Entry Level and at GCSE level they will gain. There are good opportunities for creative and aesthetic activities through art and design, visits and drama work such as the annual productions at the local town hall. Those in Key Stage 2 make outstanding progress in their art work as they make rockets for their space project and are proud to show and explain the acrylic and pastels work they have completed for their displays. They enjoy exploring different forms of music and rhythm singing with enthusiasm with their teachers as they do so. Almost all pupils say they now like school and know they are making much better progress. The school's data confirms the good and accelerated progress that pupils have made since entry to the school, particularly in their personal development, their reading and science. Parents and carers comment on this, one for example praising the progress their child has made in reading and writing, having been a non-reader on entry to Access School.

However not all subjects of the National Curriculum are taught to a minority of pupils, despite pupils' statements of educational need indicating that they should be taught. For example, music and a modern foreign language are not currently taught at Key Stage 3, although they have been in the past. Not all aspects of physical education are planned for and checked on systematically. Although there are no children aged five at present, there are no schemes for work for the Early Years Foundation Stage despite the school being registered for five year olds.

Teachers and support staff know pupils' needs well. Teaching and assessment are good because teachers plan in detail to meet pupils' needs and think carefully about how to engage their interest in lessons. Most planning builds carefully on previous lessons and takes good account of what is known about pupils' levels. Pupils are carefully assessed on entry and any individualised programmes that they need are very quickly put into place. Well matched activities promote their progress well towards the challenging targets that are set for them. All this makes a strong contribution to pupils' good progress from their starting points and also to their self esteem and confidence. Individual pupils make such good progress in relation to

their academic and personal development that they are able to return to mainstream school successfully.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have many opportunities through visits and outside activities to develop their social skills further and contribute to community life. For example they perform in the local Town Hall and raise money for charities. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory overall. Although incidents still occur in lessons, staff manage these well. They use a good balance of rewards and sanctions that help most pupils to stay on task and to improve their behaviour and cooperation well. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory overall but shows a remarkable improvement over time as they settle into school, improving, for example, from 63% to 96%. Pupils state that this is because lessons are interesting and they trust their teachers, but also because the school leaders work so well with parents and carers and other agencies to ensure pupils arrive at school and are punctual. Pupils feel valued and cared for, although a few would like even more responsibility and ways of influencing school life. Work to develop this aspect is planned through the introduction of a School Council. A strong religious education, personal, social and health education (PSHE) policy, and the visits programme, promote their self-awareness and reflection, and their understanding of the diversity of cultures and the beliefs of others, effectively. Pupils learn to be more patient and tolerant with others and to consider their point of view. They have a keen sense of fairness and right and wrong, although some still struggle to adhere to this outside of school. Pupils are well prepared for the next steps in their education and employment.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils are good. Strong links are made with parents, carers and care homes and with local authorities and social care agencies. These mean that there is consistency of management of pupils' behaviour and care needs and their emotional well-being is particularly well supported. Pupils' safety, health and well-being are well supported by the curriculum, through subjects such as PSHE and science. Safety equipment and safe practices are rigorously emphasised and aspects such as drug awareness and healthy lifestyles and relationships are systematically supported through these. All the required policies are implemented effectively, such as those for child protection, anti bullying and for health and safety. These are followed meticulously by staff and monitored carefully by the school leaders. Good policies and procedures are in place to minimise risk and these ensure that a safe, caring environment is provided for pupils within the school and on outings. Staff training in first aid and safeguarding is up to date and at the appropriate levels. Where occasional instances of bullying do happen, pupils have confidence that staff will sort these out fairly. Records of incidents and of any accidents are maintained meticulously and carefully analysed to see if any additional actions or planning is necessary. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Good attention is paid to staff training in relation to any specific special educational needs or medical needs that pupils might have such as dyslexia or autistic spectrum disorders. This supports pupils' special educational needs being met and managed effectively and contributes to their good progress.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

Arrangements to ensure the suitability of staff meet all requirements and checks are recorded on the single central register as required.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The classrooms provide a warm welcoming and safe environment in which pupils' work is celebrated and displayed well. Good use is made of the surrounding land to support pupils' gardening, animal husbandry and physical education skills, for example through work in the polytunnel or with the hens and sheep. The school is currently altering its toilet and washroom facilities so that there are separate facilities available for the youngest pupils.

Provision of information

The school provides parents and carers with all the required information through its prospectus and welcome packs. It is currently developing its website so that its policies and other information will be available in electronic form. It provides detailed annual reports to parents and carers about their child's progress and also ensures that pupils understand how well they are doing.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's complaints policy and procedures meet all of the 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'), with the exception of those listed below.³

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

- there is a curriculum policy set out in writing which is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for all subjects and for all of the ages for which the school is registered, including for those children aged five years in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and that these are implemented effectively (paragraph 2(1))

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made.

- that the curriculum is appropriately planned for all ages for which the school is registered (paragraph 2(2)(b))
- that all the subjects within the National Curriculum are planned for and taught, including music, a modern foreign language and a full planned programme of physical education for pupils who have access to the National Curriculum specified within their statement of special educational needs (paragraph 2(2)(e)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- extend the range of opportunities pupils have to develop and apply their information and computer technology skills in other 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	Special school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties		
Date school opened	2000		
Age range of pupils	5–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 10	Girls: 2	Total: 12
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 7	Girls: 2	Total: 9
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 5	Girls: 2	Total: 7
Annual fees (day pupils)	£32,760		
Address of school	Holbrook Villa Farm Harmer Hill Shrewsbury SY4 3EW		
Telephone number	01939 220797		
Email address	verity@family-care.co.uk		
Headteacher	Verity White		
Proprietor	Ed Nixon		

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.

1 March 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Access School, Shrewsbury SY4 3EW

Thank you for welcoming me into your school when I visited it recently. Thank you particularly to those of you who filled in the questionnaires and talked with me about your work and explained to me what you were doing and how the school was helping you. It was good to hear about the progress you felt you were making, both in managing your behaviour and in your schoolwork.

These are some of the things that I found out about your school.

- It is a good school where the teaching is good because teachers try hard to match the work to what you need to learn to do next.
- You make good progress in both your behaviour and attendance at school so that both of these are now satisfactory and improving rapidly.
- You make good progress in your reading and writing and towards the different qualifications you can achieve in subjects like history and science.
- This is because the teaching is good and because your teachers take good care of you.
- The school works well with your parents and carers to keep you safe and to give you as many opportunities as possible when you leave it.

I have asked the school to do a number of things to make it even better.

- To make sure that all the subjects they should teach such as music and a foreign language are taught.
- To have plans and schemes of work ready if a five-year-old child does attend the school.
- To give you more opportunities to use ICT in your lessons and to support your learning.

You can help to by continuing to try hard to manage your own behaviour and to come to school every day.

Yours sincerely
Susan Lewis
Lead Inspector