

Children's Home URN: 136239

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Peter Toft

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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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

This small independent special school is for students living in the attached children's home which is owned by Fairfield Residential. The home is situated in a residential urban area and occupies premises purpose-built for young people with autism and severe behavioural, social and learning difficulties. The school is based on the ground floor of these premises. It has no formal religious affiliation but describes its ethos as broadly Christian. It was registered in October 2010, and can admit up to five students aged between eight and 19 years. The student currently on roll has a statement of special educational needs and is looked after by his local authority.

The school aims include: 'In recognising the special and individual needs of our students, the school will endeavour to develop in each young person the necessary knowledge and skills to enable him or her to be a valued, happy and healthy member of society' and to promote 'quality of life, independence and personal development'. This is the school's first inspection; the care provision was last inspected in June 2011.

Evaluation of the school

The school provides a good quality of education and makes outstanding provision for students' welfare, health and safety. It meets its aims well through careful assessment of the students' progress; good teaching using a wide range of facilities in the community and a broad curriculum, carefully adapted to meet the specific and complex needs of the students. The staff are experienced in teaching students who are disabled or with special educational needs, including autism, and work very cooperatively as a team to safeguard and improve the self-esteem of the students, and to promote good progress and behaviour. All but one of the regulations for continued registration as an independent school are met.

Quality of education

The curriculum is of good quality and supports the good progress made by students. The overall plan for the curriculum is broad, giving scope to cover the subjects of the National Curriculum, personal, social, health and religious education. Taking account

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

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

of the complex needs of the students and their severe communication and learning difficulties, the school adapts this broad academic provision to meet their specific needs, as well as to foster independent living skills. It does this particularly well and provides planned experiences for students which lead them to enjoy learning and supports the good progress made. The requirements identified in statements of special educational needs are well met in the planning of the curriculum. The timetable is well structured to promote effective coverage of the planned content. Staff make particularly lively use of practical activities and off-site learning and this helps them secure good engagement and motivation. The timetable is well supported by high quality schemes of work based on published programmes. The school is particularly effective in using systems of pictorial symbols to help students communicate their ideas and to make clear their requests when they need something, such as to visit the toilet. Lessons are well planned and evaluated. Staff make good use of time to review particular activities and to decide cooperatively what is needed to improve them in the future. The curriculum of the school is strongly reinforced by extensive provision, largely relating to communication and living skills and leisure activities, made in the care home. However, the planning to coordinate learning in the home and the school lacks rigour and opportunities are missed to strengthen learning through a unified structure in the '24-hour curriculum'. Vocational provision is appropriate, and is well supported by the externally validated programme of the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). However, students' work is not always submitted for accreditation in a timely way.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Teaching staff are well qualified and experienced. They have a good understanding of the kinds of disabilities and special educational needs of the students for which the school caters. Their work is supported by very effective speech therapy provision which is crucial to the school's clear success in developing communication skills among students with severe autism. Staff employed in the care home, who know students very well, work side-by-side with teachers in a highly cooperative way. This cooperation, based as it is on a shared understanding of the school's good policies for teaching and assessment, is a key reason for the good progress of students.

Staff have good subject knowledge and the capacity to enthuse students who are often reluctant to engage in learning. They are particularly effective in sensing the changing moods of students and adapting their teaching and activities to retain their interest. Lessons are suitably resourced and teachers make particularly effective use of practical activities in external venues such as a farm or the gardens of a local stately home. They go to some lengths to encourage independence and this contributes well to the overall programme in the care home to prepare residents for independent living. Teaching is evaluated, partly through reviews of the outcomes of lessons and partly through an analysis carried out by the lead teacher and an external consultant. The consultant has also helped the school develop good procedures to assess students' attainment, ensuring that the very small steps they make are properly discerned and recorded. Record keeping is meticulous. It shows clearly the good progress made by students, socially and academically as well as in communication skills and in the capacity to concentrate and engage in sustained

practical activity. This progress is significantly better than it was in students' previous schools. It reflects the success of the work the school is doing to promote independent living.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. The school's clear policy is sharply focused on their complex and highly specific needs. It concentrates rightly on developing communication and social skills and improving capacity for independent living. Students clearly enjoy learning when it is practical and active; the school is very effective in providing varied and stimulating experiences. The students' increasing capability to communicate using pictorial symbols strengthens their self-esteem and encourages them to relate more effectively with others. The school's records for this development show the clear progress which has been made. They also show how behaviour has improved and how the sometimes compulsive student behaviour is increasingly under control. The effectiveness of staff in circumventing compulsive behaviour reflects the quality of their training. The staff set clear expectations for behaviour and have good procedures to help students to meet them. The behaviour and attitudes seen in lessons and around the school were good, as were the relationships between staff and students.

The distinction between right and wrong is clearly made and students increasingly display acceptable choices between them; when behaviour becomes unacceptable, experienced staff have good procedures to restore order. The considerable effort put into developing independent living skills, both in the school and during community activities, promotes learning about our country's public institutions, within the severe limitations of students' capability. This, together with an increasing awareness of other people, is supported by visits to places of worship, banks, post offices, leisure centres and other places of cultural interest, and learning within religious education, citizenship and personal, social and health education. These take place both in school time and when students are in the care home.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision to promote the welfare, health, safety and safeguarding of students is outstanding. A wide range of excellent policies are in force; they are reviewed and updated regularly. The policies are adapted by staff to ensure they match the specific and complex needs of the students on roll. They provide a strong basis for the highly consistent and vigilant manner in which staff look after students, both on and off the site. This is supported by rigorous staff training, for example, in behaviour management. Child protection procedures are robust and staff, including the designated officer, are trained at the required level. Insightful risk assessments are well used by staff as they plan activities, and are well adapted to the specific needs of the students identified in care plans, statements of special educational needs and individual education plans. The premises, including the farm used for a variety of lessons and activities, comply with health and safety requirements and are

secure and very well supervised by staff. Procedures to promote safe practical activities and fire safety are excellent. The curriculum in the school and care home contributes very well to the students' growing understanding of how to keep clean, healthy and safe. Healthy meals are prepared under the guidance of a nutritionist. Ample opportunities are provided for physical exercise and students participate in these with gusto. The students are encouraged to socialise with staff and other young people. This promotes the growth of good relationships and self-esteem very well. The school is very well designed for access and it meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The suitability of all staff, including the proprietor, to work with students has been checked in accordance with requirements. The necessary information is kept accurately on a single central record.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The on-site accommodation for teaching consists of two classrooms, a sensory room, a rest room with en-suite facilities for students who are ill, washrooms, kitchen, dining room and an external play area in the garden. Off-site educational facilities at a farm several miles from the care home include a classroom, washrooms and a play area. The accommodation, on and off the site, is pleasant and very well maintained. It is suitable for the planned intake of students and provides a very good environment for learning and to support cultural, social and vocational activities.

Provision of information

A useful school prospectus contains all of the information required. It is available to parents and carers, and the local authorities which place students here. A wide range of regularly-produced reports on the running of the school and the progress of students is also made available to parents and carers, including detailed termly reports on students' progress. However, the school does not routinely provide regular and frequent reports on the progress being made by students to the local authority, who have indicated in their response to the inspection questionnaire that they are unaware of the short-term progress being made. The school does not fulfil its obligation to provide an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school to the local authority which funds their placements.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The procedures for handling complaints meet 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 that listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- where a student who is registered at the school is wholly or partly funded by a local authority, provide an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that student to the local authority and on request to the Secretary of State (paragraph 24(1)(h)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- strengthen the 24-hour curriculum so that students' experiences of school learning and activities carried out in the care home are planned closely to support each other
- ensure that work done by students for ASDAN is submitted for certification in a timely manner to the accreditation authority
- ensure that local authorities receive regular updates on the short-term progress being made by the students they place in the school.

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

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 autism and severe behavioural, social and learning difficulties		
Date school opened	May 2011		
Age range of pupils	8-19 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£30,400		
Telephone number of school	0161 776 2827		
Email address	education@fairfieldresidential.co.uk		
Lead Teacher	Ms Melanie Sproston		
Proprietor	Ms Tzaraine Cope		

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.



19 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Children's Home: URN 136239

I promised to write to you about what I thought of your school when I had finished the inspection.

- Your school gives you a good education and you make good progress.
- The teaching is varied and very helpful. You really do enjoy your lessons.
- You take part in a lot of useful activities, seeing and doing a lot of interesting things.
- The staff take excellent care of you. They work very hard to keep you safe and show you how to live a healthy life. You are getting better at looking after yourselves and helping to prepare your meals.
- The staff want to make your school even better. To do this, I have suggested that they plan to join up better the work you do in the school and in your home; ensure that you receive your certificates for the ASDAN work completed and regularly let the local authority know how well you are doing.

I wish you and all of the staff my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Toft
Lead Inspector