

Old Warren House School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124526
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	359690
Inspection dates	21–22 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Gulshanbir Kayembe

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	14–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	20
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Elizabeth Rodgers
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2008
School address	Warren Road Lowestoft NR32 4QD
Telephone number	01502 511794
Fax number	01502 511794
Email address	oldwarren@yahoo.co.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors who observed seven lessons taught by five members of staff. Meetings were held with members of the management committee, staff and local authority representatives. Informal discussions were also held with students. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's documentation, including safeguarding policies, and assessment and attendance information. Visits were made to some of the off-site provision, including a work experience placement organised by the school for its students. Questionnaires from staff, students and 11 parents and carers were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- How well able students achieve.
- The extent to which the school improves students' attendance and punctuality by the time they leave.
- The extent to which the management committee is actively engaged in overseeing the work of the school.

Information about the school

Old Warren House is a pupil referral unit with places for up to 24 students in Key Stage 4. Those who are referred are school refusers, or have either been excluded or are at the point of exclusion from their previous school. The primary aim of Old Warren House is to provide full-time education and training that prepares students for further education, training or employment. Students have a broad range of social, emotional and behavioural needs and many have moderate learning difficulties. Nearly half, have a statement of special educational needs. About 25% of students are known to be eligible for free school meals and a further 30% are awaiting confirmation of eligibility. Students join at various points during the year. Nearly all students are White British and none speaks English as an additional language. The school has a range of awards and quality marks including Healthy Schools status, Eco Schools Bronze and Silver awards, Investors in People and Quality Mark for Secondary Schools.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Old Warren House provides a good quality of education for its students. Many elements of its work are outstanding. Students are provided with an exceptionally safe and secure environment within which the large majority thrive. Outstanding care, guidance and support underpin every aspect of the school's work in order to support the very wide ranging and often complex social and emotional needs of students. Strong partnerships with a wide range of other professionals, voluntary sector organisations and educational settings enable the school to promote students' learning and well-being exceptionally well. Behaviour is excellent.

Students begin at the school with very low attainment. Though this remains well below national averages by the time they leave, the large majority have made significant progress in their learning, and their behaviour and attitudes have improved radically. All students leave with at least a qualification in English and mathematics and most are also successful in a range of nationally accredited examinations and vocational courses. Their enjoyment of work experience enables them to complete this to a good standard and develop their skills and knowledge of the world of work. Though attendance is low, nearly all students improve their attendance and punctuality, and many achieve extremely good attendance, by the time they leave because of the highly effective strategies used by staff. The large majority of students move on to further education, training or employment when they leave.

The quality of teaching and learning are excellent because students' needs are so well catered for and the teaching programme is personal to each individual. Behaviour is exceptionally well managed. Staff intuitively sense the students' mood and gently but firmly steer them through the work. Expectations are high and enable students to complete a significant amount of work. Staff provide considerable feedback to students on their work, including the next steps on how they can move their work on. However, this is not as consistently provided when work is marked and students are not always confident about what they need to do to improve.

The school provides an individually tailored programme for each student. This includes an excellent mix of on-site courses and off-site vocational and academic learning. The off-site provision is carefully assessed and matched to individual interests and preferences. Personal development and life skills programmes are very well developed and lead to students developing an excellent understanding of how to take care of themselves, cook healthy food and keep safe. The special educational needs and/or disabilities of students are very well catered for in the most part and the needs of most students, including those with statements, are met. Statements of special educational needs are not, however, altered to reflect the different curricular provision at the school compared to mainstream schools. The local authority has recently revised its approach to students who are referred

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to Old Warren House to ensure that there is a good match between their needs and the provision available. This process has yet to be embedded but is the right approach given that there are a very small number of students whose very complex emotional and behavioural needs are not entirely met. Though the school achieves, as one professional commented, more success with them than anyone else, these students' attendance remains low. They make progress in their learning but not to such a great extent as the large majority of others.

The headteacher provides excellent leadership and, in partnership with the deputy headteacher, works very effectively to continuously improve the quality of provision. The management committee is well informed about the school's work through meetings and reports. However, it is more limited in its active engagement with the school. Based on accurate self-evaluation and the good focus on continuous development of provision, the school has good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- For the local authority to ensure that the requirements for students with statements of special educational needs are fully met by ensuring that:
 - statements and provision match
 - new procedures for assessing referrals to the school are used to ensure that the needs of students placed there can be fully met.
- Develop the role of the management committee by ensuring that members are more actively involved in the school's work.
- Provide more written guidance to students on their next steps in learning and help them to become more confident in identifying what they need to do to improve their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Achievement is good overall. Students develop their personal and life skills exceptionally well. A significant number are four or five years behind their chronological ages in literacy and numeracy. All have significant gaps in their knowledge and understanding in National Curriculum subjects, often due to poor attendance in the past. Hence, students very rarely arrive having begun GCSEs at their previous schools. Nonetheless, most make outstanding progress in their learning. They achieve success in courses that are the right level for their needs on-site and off-site, including GCSE Entry Level, Assessment and Qualifications Alliance certificates and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network awards. More able students achieve very well in higher level literacy and numeracy courses. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Those known to be eligible for free school meals also make similar progress as others.

In lessons, students show high levels of engagement with their work. They are willing to try new ideas, for example experimenting with art to develop more creative and individual pieces of work. The quality of art work is very good. Students make exceptionally good use of computers to support their learning and are confident in using a range of programs independently. The success students experience in their work is a major factor in improving their behaviour and attitudes to work and motivating them to achieve.

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Students feel, and are, very safe both in the school and when working off-site. Their excellent behaviour makes a significant contribution to their sense of safety. They enjoy morning and afternoon break sessions, conversing pleasantly with each other or engaging in a good natured game of pool. Animations created by students on the dangers of smoking demonstrate their excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles as well as their good skills in film-making. Activities such as these serve to increase students' sense of self-esteem and self-confidence in their own abilities and support their good cultural development. They also develop respect for others, including those from different racial backgrounds, and show curiosity and interest when, for example, working on legends from different cultures. Students make a good contribution to their school and wider community by making positive suggestions for improvement, fundraising for good causes, cooking meals for special occasions and working with pupils in a local special school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The learning environment at the school is exceptionally calm and orderly. Excellent planning means that work is very carefully matched to the needs of individual students. As a result, they are very well motivated to learn and co-operate well with their teachers and support staff. Teachers constantly talk to students about their work and alter and amend their approaches to suit the needs of individuals. As they work with students, teachers develop both the confidence and the skills of independent learning of students. Written

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work is regularly marked and the positive comments do much for students' confidence. Students are also encouraged to evaluate their own work and what they have learned. However, they are less specific in identifying how they can improve.

The curriculum is good overall, but outstanding in many respects, not least the lengths that staff go to in order to secure off-site placements that match the interests and needs of individuals. These help to raise aspirations and prepare students for future life. However, despite the school's best efforts, the more complex emotional needs of a very small number are not entirely met. Statements of special educational needs still state that students are given access to the full National Curriculum and religious education because they have not been amended to reflect the shift from mainstream schools to Old Warren House. This is a technical issue but one that has not been addressed by the local authority. For the large majority of students, the curricular provision matches needs exceptionally well.

Staff, led by the headteacher, promote an exceptional culture of care and support. They work extremely closely with parents, external agencies and professionals for the benefit of students. Vulnerable students and their families are very well supported. Staff are particularly successful in raising the self-esteem and confidence of the students they work with. The school is doing everything possible to improve attendance. For example, staff and external professionals support individual students go as far as picking them up from home to ensure they attend.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Staff are proud to work at the school because senior leaders have created a strong sense of common purpose and of teamwork. Teaching and learning are very well monitored within the school. There is good oversight of the off-site provision and how well this is meeting students' needs. Regular feedback and reports from off-site providers ensure that the school has a clear view of the progress and attendance of students. A member of staff is very effectively deployed to supervise off-site provision and students' engagement. This results in excellent relationships between providers and the school and ensures that any issues and teething problems are rapidly addressed.

Informative reports provide a useful basis for the management committee to question and challenge school leaders on the work they are doing. The committee has not developed enough mechanisms for more active engagement and oversight of the school's work. It has yet to engage parental representation. The committee does, however, ensure that safeguarding procedures fully meet requirements. Off-site safeguarding arrangements are

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monitored, for example, to make sure that adults working with students have all undertaken police checks. The local authority has appropriate systems in place for monitoring the work of the school.

For most students, the school and what it provides ensures very good equality of opportunity to succeed not just within school but in future life. However, for a very small number, although the school does everything it can, their needs are not fully met. Revised approaches by the local authority in the way it places students are a helpful development for improving this in the future.

Community cohesion is very strongly promoted at school and local community level. The curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities to learn about people from other ethnic and religious backgrounds, both in Britain and abroad. Visits and visitors add a positive first-hand dimension to students' experiences, and plans are afoot to extend this by establishing links with a school in Nepal.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are very positive about their own and their children's experiences at Old Warren House. No concerns were expressed in the written comments, only praise for the way the school has changed their children's experiences of education. Even where parents or carers have disagreed with one of the statements in the questionnaire, their written comments are extremely positive.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Old Warren House School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 11 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 20 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	6	55	4	36	1	9	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	7	64	4	36	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	8	73	3	27	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	6	55	5	45	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	6	55	5	45	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	7	64	4	36	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	6	55	5	45	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	6	55	5	45	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	7	64	4	36	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	7	64	4	36	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	64	4	36	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	7	64	4	36	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	8	73	2	18	0	0	1	9

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

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.



25 October 2010

Dear Students,

Inspection of Old Warren House School, Lowestoft, NR32 4QD

Thank you for your help and for taking the time to give us your views during the recent inspection. I am writing to you to tell you about our main findings. We think that the school provides you with a good education. Most of you achieve exceptionally well and grow in confidence as you improve your learning. We can see how proud you are of the certificates that you achieve.

The calm, warm and friendly atmosphere in the school gives you a strong sense of belonging.

The outstanding care, guidance and support you receive helps you to feel exceptionally safe and helps you to focus on your learning and future life.

The school organises lots of different off-site provision for you, which you enjoy and appreciate.

The headteacher and staff work closely with other professionals and agencies to support your needs.

You develop very good cookery and art skills during your time at the school.

In order to make the school even better, we have asked the school to help you become more confident in saying what you could do better to improve your work. We have also asked the local authority to make sure that statements of special educational needs reflect what you do at the school and to make sure that the new procedures for allocating places at the school work well. The management committee is very keen to further develop their role, and we have agreed that it would be helpful if they were more actively involved in the work of the school.

We think that you can help by continuing to work hard and attending as regularly as you can. We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Gulshanbir Kayembe

Lead inspector

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