

Fullerton House School

Independent school standard inspection report

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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

Fullerton House School is a residential special school situated in a large village near Doncaster. The school opened in 1990 and is registered for students between eight and 19 years of age. It is one of two educational establishments owned and run by the Hesley Group in the local area for students who have complex needs and challenging behaviours mainly arising from autism. Some aspects of the curriculum are delivered in conjunction with another establishment, Hesley Village. All students at Fullerton House School have a statement of educational needs and have experienced severe barriers to learning. Their primary needs arise from disorders on the autistic spectrum which have led to challenging behaviour. The majority of students have severe communication difficulties.

There are currently 29 students on roll, aged between 10 and 19 years. Most are boys and one third of students are over 16. All but four students reside at the school, with placements funded by a number of local authorities, usually following the breakdown of a previous placement. The residential provision at the school was not part of this inspection.

The school's prospectus states that the Hesley Group seeks to enhance the lives of students, to enable them to reach their full potential and to develop as 'successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens'. The previous inspection of the education provision was in January 2009.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of education is outstanding. The school meets its aims exceptionally well. The outstanding curriculum and teaching help students in overcoming the difficulties arising from their disabilities, so that they enjoy learning and make outstanding progress. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, reflecting the high priority the school accords to this aspect of their work. The school meets all the regulations for independent schools. It has made good improvement since its previous inspection, most noticeably in the provision it makes for students' welfare, health and safety, which is now outstanding. The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet all the requirements.

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

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

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding. Well-structured programmes combine highly effectively to meet students' needs exceptionally well, enabling them to make outstanding progress. Learning experiences are delivered coherently through a programme of overarching themes, underpinned by a set of common values and linked to the National Curriculum. These themes cover the required areas of learning and include: communication and literacy; creativity; personal and physical development; knowledge, skills and understanding of the world; problem-solving and numeracy. The planning is fine-tuned to respond to the needs of individual students.

Major strengths lie in work-related learning and links with the community, emphasising the preparation for adult life. An excellent range of opportunities and accreditation for learning foster this provision. The curriculum highly successfully reinforces students' key skills in working with others, making choices and taking responsibility, whilst also developing their communication and numeracy skills. Students practise independent living skills in real contexts, through enterprise activities. These include running a tuckshop and selling their own produce, food and plants from the school garden and crafts. This activity increases students' awareness of the world of work and enhances their social skills. An active partnership with a local academy further develops students' awareness of others, in forming positive relationships with their peers. Students are involved in conservation and recycling projects. Easy access to the local environment helps promote students' well-being, for example walking nearby, with an outdoor activities programme that includes swimming, horse riding and cycling proficiency. Since its last inspection the school has further developed its provision for learning outdoors, with an outdoor learning environment easily accessible from the art and craft classrooms and a garden.

The school emphasises learning through practical experience. Vocational aspects reflect individual students' interests and needs, for example, with woodworking, textiles, horticulture and art. These engage students well and contribute much to their good behaviour. An extensive programme of extra-curricular opportunities, including regular lunchtime activities allows students to relax and benefits their health and well-being. The curriculum includes therapeutic interventions from specialists. Those students identified as having more complex learning needs have a discrete provision with flexible working areas. The school is poised to begin to monitor and evaluate the impact of this provision. Subjects link up highly effectively. Students see processes through to the finished product, for example, from coppicing, to making willow baskets, painting, planting and selling them. Imaginative ideas abound, such as filming a bird nesting-box and using the footage to bring science lessons to life.

Students learn about the importance of personal appearance and everyday routines, such as getting a haircut in the salon at the college and coping with individual fears. A dentist visits the school and pet therapy helps students with a fear of dogs. The curriculum is flexibly planned and highly responsive to students' changing needs. Planning involves working with other agencies and professionals to support students.

Teaching and assessment are outstanding. Consistently good teaching enables the students to make small steps in learning day by day, building up their skills and good behaviour highly successfully over time. Starting with a low level of skills, with very challenging behaviour, students make outstanding progress. Developing students' skills in communication is a key priority. Excellent relationships between students and staff encourage students to persevere with their work. Staff are well trained in managing challenging behaviour, but as lessons are interesting and well-planned, instances of such behaviour are minimised. A calm atmosphere allows effective learning to take place. Teachers use resources imaginatively, drawing very effectively on information and communication technology (ICT) to promote engagement and active learning. Students say that they enjoy using ICT to publish their school council magazine.

There are well-established systems for assessing students' progress. This information feeds into lesson planning, so that suitable activities are chosen for individual students that build on their previous learning. Students benefit from one-to-one support from an assistant, enhancing the guidance they receive. Each student is involved in setting and reviewing specific personal targets, which encourages positive attitudes to learning. The school's leaders check the progress students make against national benchmarks for students with similar needs, thereby ensuring that they have high expectations of what students can achieve.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is outstanding. The excellent curriculum fosters students' personal development exceptionally well. The school highly successfully develops students' social skills, including their ability to interact with others in appropriate ways. Various communication systems help students to express their views and to make an active contribution to their school and local community. School routines and conventions encourage students' awareness of right and wrong and provide a good structure to the day. Extensive, highly-structured experiences in the community foster students' tolerance and understanding of others. Opportunities for active citizenship include work on the environment locally and recycling. Good sensory elements in the curriculum help to reduce students' anxiety and promote improvements in their communication skills. Visits out of school are purposefully planned with learning in mind, reinforcing key aspects of the curriculum.

Opportunities abound for students to have a say in decision-making. For example, students contribute to choosing their pathways to learning; the school council choose play equipment and colour schemes for classrooms and have designed a garden. In their *Live and Learn* magazine, students report on events and successes. The National Youth Advocacy Service works with the student council.

Students learn about keeping themselves safe in innovative ways. For example, through a link with the local police force, students attend a centre with stage-sets of services, where they learn through simulations about managing risks.

The school is keen to find ways to encourage further independence for those students for whom this is appropriate. Current opportunities include visiting a local shop or travelling independently. Students are closely supported in school on a one-to-one basis by assistants. This encourages well their involvement in activities and promotes their safety. However, while some opportunities arise in lessons and around school for students to act independently, these are as yet not extensive.

Attendance is high, reflecting students' enjoyment of school. Behaviour is good. With support, students behave well. Sometimes the nature of students' disabilities continues to give rise to difficulties in engaging in learning. The school manages this issue very well, adjusting the curriculum to suit each student in order to minimise instances of challenging behaviour. These approaches are highly successful; instances where any form of restraint has had to be used are rare. For some students, the distance they have travelled in managing their behavioural responses since joining the school represents outstanding individual progress.

Well-planned programmes for personal, social, health education, citizenship and for religious education include learning about other faiths and cultures in ways that promote students' understanding. Most students work cooperatively together and this is encouraged at all times. For example, students greatly enjoyed interviewing one another with a dictaphone in a tutorial lesson observed.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The arrangements to promote the welfare, health and safety of students are outstanding. Safeguarding procedures and practice are robust. All the policies required to underpin this are effectively implemented. The school keeps meticulous records. Training in child protection, including for the designated officer, is up to date. Safer recruitment checks are undertaken. Checks for fire and electrical safety and fire training for staff and for first aid are up to date. Risk assessments for school activities and visits include both the venue and individual risk assessments for each student. Students are supervised very closely at all times.

Nearly all parents and carers who replied to the questionnaire were very happy with the provision the school makes for their child. The school meets its duties under the Equality act 2010. The excellent care the school provides for students helps to remove barriers to learning. Care staff and school staff work well together to promote students' welfare. The excellent curriculum promotes students' health, fitness, safety and emotional well-being very effectively. Students say that they feel happy and safe in school. Appropriate measures are in place for the prevention of bullying.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school conducts all the checks that it is currently required to do on its staff and supply staff, to check that there is no reason why they should not work with children.

This includes a check with the Criminal Records Bureau. The school keeps a record of these checks on a single central register, as required.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The premises are highly suitable as a school. They provide a very conducive environment for learning for students with autistic spectrum disorders. The premises have recently been further extended and upgraded. They provide generous space, with specialist facilities, classrooms and rooms for practical activities, including those for cooking, art, ICT, crafts, woodwork, pottery and horticulture. There are quiet areas, sensory rooms and space for therapeutic interventions. The sports hall, outside learning and playground areas and a garden offer good spaces for relaxation and learning. There is an administration block and dining room. The school draws on facilities for vocational learning, such as for hair and beauty, and for coppicing, at the Hesley Village.

Provision of information

The school provides all the required information for parents and carers and other interested parties. Parents and carers receive full written reports on students' progress. Several local authorities responded to the questionnaire and all were very positive about the school's provision.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's arrangements for handling complaints fully meet the regulation.

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:

- monitor and evaluate the new provision made for students with the most complex needs, to check its impact over time and how well it meets students' individual needs
- further promote students' independence in learning, for those students for whom this is appropriate.

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	Residential special school for students with complex needs and challenging behaviours		
Date school opened	1990		
Age range of pupils	8 to 19 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 24	Girls: 5	Total: 29
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 24	Girls: 5	Total: 29
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 24	Girls: 5	Total: 29
Annual fees (day pupils)	£240,000		
Address of school	off Tickhill Square Denaby Doncaster South Yorkshire DN12 4AR		
Telephone number	01709 861663		
Email address	David.Whitehead@hesleygroup.co.uk		
Headteacher	David Whitehead		
Proprietor	Hesley Group		

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.



29 June 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Fullerton House School, Denaby DN12 4AR

I am writing to thank you for your help when I came recently to inspect your school and to tell you what I thought.

The quality of education you receive is outstanding, in other words it is super! The curriculum, teaching and assessment and your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are also outstanding. You have lots of really interesting activities to do. It was good to see all the things you get involved with in your local area. Your school helps you very well in preparing for your future.

Your behaviour is good. You try hard in your lessons and I can see from all the information the school collects that you are making excellent progress over time.

The school staff look after you very well. The arrangements they make to safeguard you and for your welfare, health and safety are outstanding.

Thank you for completing your questionnaires and for talking to me. I can see from these that you enjoy being at school and that you feel safe there.

Yours sincerely

Honoree Gordon
Her Majesty's Inspector