

Owlswick School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Martyn Groucutt

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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

Owlswick was established as a residential special school in 1981 in Lewes, East Sussex. It is registered for up to 11 students, male and female, between the ages of 10-19 years with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, or associated developmental disorders such as autistic spectrum disorders or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Some students have associated problems such as moderate learning difficulties. The school has not provided education for post-16 students for some time. The eight enrolled students all have a statement of special education needs; all are boys and all have been placed by their local authority. Five are in the care of their local authority and all have histories of severely disrupted schooling. The school is housed in a separate building to residential provision and uses the grounds to provide learning and recreational opportunities that supplement classroom-based activities.

The school's aim is to enable young people who have experienced difficulties and disruption in their lives and education to feel valued, secure and successful. The last education inspection was in January 2009, with the last social care report in November 2011. Since the last inspection, new proprietors have taken over the school following the retirement of the previous proprietors.

Evaluation of the school

The school is meeting its aims and provides a good quality of education. Many features of the school are good, including the curriculum, teaching and assessment. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good in supporting students to develop greater self-confidence, self-esteem and good behaviour. Care provision is good, supporting good progress in personal as well as academic development. Provision for students' welfare, health and safety including safeguarding is satisfactory rather than good because while all appropriate safeguarding checks are carried out they are not recorded in a single central register and the policy to prevent bullying has not been fully updated in line with the latest guidance. The school has successfully addressed the regulatory failures in the last education report but now does not meet other 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, covering all the required areas of learning and has a focus on developing basic skills in literacy, numeracy, science, and information and communication technology (ICT). It is based on the National Curriculum, with a vocational element for students over the age of 14. Some elements of the wider curriculum, such as art, are outstanding in their content. Teachers modify the curriculum well to suit the needs of individual students and the requirements of individual education plans are met meticulously.

Effective personal, social and health education helps students to develop their understanding of their role in wider society. Great care is taken to support every student in becoming an independent and positive member of the community. This is reinforced by students' participation in a wide range of after-school activities and membership of clubs, such as a local athletics club, scouts and youth club.

A daily meeting takes place after school, led by care staff, reflecting on the day and students' responses to the curriculum and the teaching. This demonstrates the excellent links between education and care staff.

There are good resources and accommodation to ensure the successful delivery of most of the curriculum, including specialist provision for ICT and art. However, particularly for the older students, there is some lack of specialist equipment, which limits the curriculum, for example, in design and technology. Careers education is good but the school has difficulties in finding work experience placements to support careers education. Therefore, the curriculum is not yet outstanding.

Teaching and assessment are good overall, while some teaching is outstanding. There is a very positive rapport between staff and students, which supports students' re-engagement in learning after previous educational failure and breakdown. Positive engagement is encouraged by teachers' skills in questioning to get students to think for themselves and to develop their own opinions. There is an expectation that students will gain external qualifications in entry level English, mathematics, ICT and science and there is a history of students being doing well at GCSE art.

Teachers plan lessons carefully using a common format. They work very effectively with teaching assistants so that students receive a high level of individual support that encourages success and responsible behaviour. As a result, students make good progress overall. Work is marked regularly and the marking praises the progress that students are making. The assessments undertaken by teachers are used well to inform their teaching. However, the school has not yet developed a common form of assessment of students' work.

At the moment, it is possible for teachers to track a students' progress and this information is used to ensure students' good progress overall. However, the system lacks some clarity and so limits the extent to which teachers can set targets precisely

enough so as to stretch and challenge students even more during lessons and in other work. For this reason in particular, teaching and assessment are not yet outstanding.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school helps to transform the self-image of students so that they develop far more positive self-knowledge, and it also develops their self-esteem and self-confidence effectively. There is a strong community ethos, reflected in the positive ways in which students help each other and discuss each other's work and contributions to learning. After school, older students can be seen helping and supporting the younger ones and thus making a positive contribution to community life. Students enjoy school and attend well, often for the first time for many years. Tolerance and understanding of others is not only taught in formal lessons in art, music, religious education and citizenship, but it is also promoted positively in the everyday interactions between staff and students, both in the residential and educational settings.

Positive behaviour is expected and a reward system, reinforced by consistently applied sanctions, provides clear boundaries so that behaviour is good. If a student's behaviour falls below the high standards expected, staff are accepting and supportive, working positively to support students realise their errors in a non-judgemental way. Students say the system is fair and helps them to develop socially as well as educationally. It is a positive reflection of their good progress that over time they develop a good sense of right and wrong, and accept responsibilities. They develop an understanding of people who come from different backgrounds and traditions that will support them in becoming positive and independent members of wider society as they approach adulthood. However, there are limited opportunities to meet adults from different ethnic, religious or community backgrounds in a learning context.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. All the required policies are in place including those for child protection, behaviour, anti-bullying, fire and first aid. However, the anti-bullying policy does not refer to cyber-bullying, or to bullying based on a person's ethnicity, religion, culture, gender or sexual orientation. This weakness is not significant in practice because a good, tolerant community spirit is clear throughout the school and staff support students effectively in maximising their educational and social progress. The policy on first aid is effective with medication given by care, rather than education, staff. All the policies concerning fire safety are implemented effectively and checks of equipment are undertaken and logged in line with requirements. Careful assessment of risks is undertaken both in school and for trips and visits, and health and safety requirements are met.

Students are properly supervised and registers are in good order. While staff are trained in the use of restraint, this is seen as a last resort and all incidents of its use

are correctly logged. Excellent joint working between care and education staff sees incidents during the school day dealt with by care staff so that teaching is disrupted to the least possible extent.

Almost all of the required arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff are in place and provision for safeguarding is robust; students are safe. All staff are aware of the child protection procedures and their responsibilities because training is seen as a priority and is up to date. The requirements of the Equality Act 2010 are met.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school has carried out the appropriate checks on staff, supply staff and proprietors. However, it keeps the information in individual staff files rather than in a required single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school is now based in new premises, separate from the residential provision, reflecting a positive development under the new proprietor. This provides excellent, safe accommodation for learning. The classrooms are well equipped and displays of students' work enliven them and create a positive learning environment. Toilets are clean, well maintained and of suitable number. The extensive landscaped grounds are used effectively for learning and for recreation, maximising opportunities to benefit from the attractive and interesting environment.

Provision of information

All of the required information is provided, or made available, to parents, carers and others. It is clear, accurate and up-to-date and is available in hard copy and electronically.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a policy for dealing with complaints but it does not comply with requirements in relation to the hearing of complaints before a panel, the composition of the panel, parents and carers' attendance at the panel, and the communication and recording of findings.

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

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

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and do these arrangements have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 7)
- ensure that there are effective procedures to prevent bullying which have regard to the DfE guidance *Preventing and tackling bullying – advice for school leaders, staff and governing bodies* (paragraph 10).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors (standards in part 4) and must:

- ensure that the information required in the single central register is recorded so that it is capable of being reproduced in a legible form (paragraph 22(2))
- ensure that for each member of staff appointed on or **after** 1 May 2007, the register shows that the following checks were made, including the date on which each check was completed or the certificate obtained:
 - the person's identity
 - the person is not barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (ISA barred list), or there is no direction made under section 142 of the 2002 Act in respect of that person (List 99), or disqualification prohibition or restriction having the same effect
 - of relevant qualifications, if appropriate
 - whether an enhanced criminal records bureau (CRB) certificate was obtained
 - in the case of any person for whom, by reason of living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, the further checks made which have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State
 - of their right to work in the United Kingdom
 - in the case of staff who care for, train, supervise or are in charge of children for whom accommodation is provided, a check was made to ensure compliance with Standard 38 of the national minimum standards for boarding schools, or where applicable, Standard 27 of the national minimum standards for residential special schools (paragraph 22(3))
- ensure that for each member of staff in appointed at any time **before** 1 May 2007, the register shows that the following checks have been made, including the date on which each check was completed or the certificate obtained:
 - of the person's identity
 - to establish whether the person is not barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (ISA barred list), or there is no direction made under section 142 of the 2002 Act in respect of that person (List 99), or disqualification prohibition or restriction having the same effect
 - of relevant qualifications where appropriate
 - whether an enhanced CRB certificate was obtained

- in the case of any person for whom, by reason of living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, the further checks made which have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State
- in the case of staff who care for, train, supervise or are in charge of children for whom accommodation is provided, a check was made to ensure compliance with Standard 38 of the national minimum standards for boarding schools, or where applicable, Standard 27 of the national minimum standards for residential special schools (paragraph 22(4)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the manner in which complaints are to be handled (standards in part 7) and must:

- if the parent is not satisfied with the response to the written complaint make provision for the establishment of a hearing before a panel appointed by the proprietor of at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint (paragraph 25(f))
- where there is a panel hearing of a complaint make provision that one person on the panel is independent of the management and running of the school (paragraph 25(g))
- allow for parents to attend the panel hearing and, if they wish, be accompanied (paragraph 25(h))
- provide for the panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulate that a copy of the findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, to the person complained about; and are available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and headteacher (paragraph 25(i))
- provide for written records to be kept of all complaints, indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing (paragraph 25(j)).

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 students with behavioural, emotional and social development needs.		
Date school opened	1981		
Age range of pupils	10-19 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 8	Girls: 0	Total: 8
Number of boarders	Boys: 8	Girls: 0	Total: 8
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 8	Girls: 0	Total: 8
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 5	Girls: 0	Total: 5
Annual fees (boarders)	£ 85,458		
Address of school	Owlswick School Newhaven Road Kingston Lewes East Sussex BN7 3NF		
Telephone number	01273 473078		
Email address	sarah@owlswick.co.uk		
Headteacher	Margaret Peacock		
Proprietor	Sarah Hawke & Michael Mayne		

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.



18 June 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Owlswick Residential Special School, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 3NF

I am writing to thank you for the warm welcome you gave us during our recent inspection. We have taken account of your views in coming to our judgements and I am delighted to confirm that you go to a good school.

Before you started at Owlswick you all had difficulties with previous schools and some of you had virtually dropped out of education. I saw you all working well, getting on well with each other and with the adults and, as a result, now making good progress. The school expects that you will all gain some exam passes if you remain at the school, which will be a very good achievement. It is clear that you get on very well with the staff, who in turn care a great deal about you and want you to do your best. This is helping you to develop a much more positive view about other people and to understand the needs of others.

Although you are making good progress in your learning we believe the school could still make some improvements to make it even better. In particular, it could track your learning progress better and set you challenging learning targets that could be used to help you do even better in every lesson. The school also needs to change the way it records the security checks it makes on staff who work with you and it needs to improve its complaints policy.

We saw that the school tries hard to listen to your views and take them into account. If you respond positively and continue to do your best you will be able to do well. We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Martyn Groucutt
Lead inspector