

Wilsic Hall School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Amraz Ali HMI

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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

Wilsic Hall is a special school, located in a rural area close to Doncaster. It opened in 1996 and it is part of the Hesley Group and caters for up to 36 students between the ages of 11 and 19 years. The school was previously inspected in 2009. Residential placements are provided on a 52-week basis for almost all students. The school admits students throughout the year and there are 28 full-time students and one part-time student currently registered at the school; 23 are post-16. There are 22 boys and six girls, and 28 are looked after by their local authority, which fund the placements. All students have a statement of special educational needs resulting from challenging behaviours, mostly associated with autism. Most have severe learning difficulties and communication problems. The school has dual registration as a children's home. An inspection of this provision took place at the same time and the full report is published separately.

The school aims to 'ensure that all students achieve their potential'.

Evaluation of the school

Wilsic Hall School successfully meets its aims and provides its students with a good quality of education. Teaching is good and the outstanding curriculum meets students' needs by providing individualised learning opportunities and has strengths in the opportunities that promote pupils' personal development. Recent improvements include the introduction of a reading scheme and a more structured approach to teaching students about letters and sounds. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school meets almost all of the regulations for independent schools. Safeguarding meets requirements and the arrangements for welfare, health and safety are outstanding.

Quality of education

The outstanding curriculum is very well adapted to meet the needs and interests of students. It includes all of the required areas of study and is based on the National Curriculum with a clear focus on developing the basic skills of English and

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

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

mathematics. The development of communication skills is a priority with planned opportunities for students to talk, sign or use the picture exchange system. There are particular strengths in the attention that is paid to making sure that each lesson is linked to individual learning plans, which identify the very small steps of learning that are planned for every student. Good arrangements for undertaking annual reviews of statements of special educational needs allow students to contribute to their reviews. There is a strong emphasis on personal, social and health education. For example, in one lesson students learned about the need for good personal hygiene and the need to help others and were encouraged to communicate their feelings. Multi-sensory techniques, including massage and a soft-play room, are used very effectively to engage and stimulate students.

The use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning is very good. Very effective use is made of the kitchen areas within each classroom to develop food technology skills, life skills and social activities. For example, in one class students were able to select a recipe and successfully make their own lunch. Visits are a particular strength and good use is made of the school's resources including access to a minibus for travel. There is a very strong emphasis on developing work-related skills for students in Key Stage 4 and post-16. Almost all students benefit from undertaking 'jobs around the school site', such as painting and decorating or cleaning. Many students undertake visits to places of work such as farms, cafés and museums so that they can appreciate the different jobs available in the future and some students undertake work experience including placements in cafes and shops. The 24-hour curriculum enhances students' learning. Very good liaison between care staff and school staff allow both concerns and successes to be shared. Activities with care staff outside the school mean that students learn about money from shopping trips and staying healthy by taking part in sports and dance clubs. They are encouraged to socialise by joining organisations like the Scouts.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall. Consequently, students across the school make good progress overall from their starting points and for some progress is outstanding. Teachers, teaching assistants and care support staff know students well and establish good relationships and clear routines to support students' learning. A key aspect of the school's success is the very good staff-to-student ratio. This has a particularly good impact on the management of students' behaviour which results in a largely calm and purposeful learning environment. However, although the work of many teaching assistants and care support staff makes a positive contribution to the learning of students it is at times variable.

Improvements since the previous inspection mean that more able students undertake more tasks related to reading and writing and record these in exercise books. The introduction of a reading scheme is helping individual students to improve their confidence in reading and there is a more structured approach to teaching about letters and sounds. The school effectively assesses individual students' progress in communications and social development and sets personal targets for improvement. Where appropriate, students are entered for national 'entrance level' qualifications.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall with particular strengths in the provision for social development. Students' spiritual development is promoted effectively through assemblies, hymn singing and by providing opportunities for them to experience the natural world during the many visits outside.

The regular weekly assembly is used well to celebrate students' achievements and to encourage students to appreciate the achievements of others. Clear rules and routines ensure that students' behaviour is good and at times outstanding. Students develop an understanding of right and wrong and they are encouraged to take turns and help others. Students are encouraged to take on responsibilities where they are able to, for example, some take turns serving drinks and snacks. They are encouraged to express their feelings and to understand the feelings of others.

Students are encouraged to appreciate their own and other cultures through the study of the major world religions in assemblies and lessons. For example, in an assembly students were taught about *Yom Kippur*, the Jewish Day of Atonement. Students are encouraged to appreciate other cultures through activities such as tasting food from around the world, listening to world music and by studying different countries. Visits to places of interest such as museums, art galleries and libraries teach students about a broad range of English institutions. Their views are effectively sought through the school council.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for safeguarding students' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. All students have effective plans in place to support them to learn in a very safe and caring environment, with a focus on improving their behaviour and engagement in learning. These plans use the detailed knowledge that staff have of each student. Strengths include the very high quality of accommodation and space for learning. The very good staff-to-student ratio ensures that the supervision of students is always effective. A high number of staff hold first aid qualifications and have received regular first aid training. Risk assessments are carried out for all educational activities inside the school and outdoors. Thorough risk assessments and security procedures are in place. Students' actions and responses indicate that they feel safe and well cared for in an environment with very clear routines and procedures designed to keep students safe. Very careful record keeping indicates that bullying is rare and any 'fall outs' between students are dealt with by staff. Students are given good advice about how to stay healthy and are able to choose healthy food, for example they are encouraged to eat fruit and vegetables. The school complies with the requirements to keep an admission and attendance register. The daily attendance register is kept centrally for all students at the site and meets requirements. A second daily attendance register is maintained in each classroom in

order to simulate a real school experience for the students. However, the practice of giving 'full marks' even when a student refuses to attend lessons results in inaccurate information being gathered. All staff receive regular safeguarding training at the required level.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

Prior to appointment, checks by the Criminal Records Bureau are completed. Information is kept in a single central register to show that all staff have been subject to the required checks.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school is set in spacious grounds around the main house, a Grade 2 listed building, with office facilities and meeting rooms. The site has been developed to simulate a street with residential accommodation in flats and houses. This means that students have to leave 'home' and walk to school each day.

The main school block, named The Sam Wrigley School and College, provides three classrooms and a hall along with a range of specialist areas, such as an art/design and technology room and a small computer suite. Facing the main entrance there is an additional classroom housed in the main house. A mobile classroom also offers a multi-sensory suite and close by is a soft playroom. Classroom accommodation is mostly good and a good range of educational displays enhance the learning environment. There are plans to remove the mobile units and part of the main house is currently undergoing refurbishment in order to accommodate a multi-sensory room and classrooms.

There are very good outdoor facilities, with a mixture of hard-play surfaces, grassed areas, wild flower and wooded areas, all of which enhance students' learning and enjoyment. For example, many students take daily walks around the grounds.

Provision of information

The school prospectus and its appendices provide parents, carers and others with a good range of information about the school. It includes all of the required information for parents and carers, including a statement of curriculum aims and identifies the full range of policies which may be requested. The school provides each local authority with a percentage breakdown of how the fees paid are spent, which gives a broad overview of spending. This does not meet the requirements of the regulation which requires an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred in respect of each student to be provided to the local authority.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's procedures for handling complaints are available to parents and carers on request. Information on how parents and carers can access procedures is contained in the school's prospectus. This meets 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 provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- where a pupil who is registered at the school is wholly or partly funded by the local authority, submit an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil 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:

- improve the consistency of the quality of the work of the teaching assistants and care support staff when supporting learning in classrooms
- review the procedures for completing the daily attendance registers in order to better reflect when students attend lessons 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		
Date school opened	1996		
Age range of pupils	11–19 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 22	Girls: 6	Total: 28
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of boarders	Boys: 22	Girls: 6	Total: 28
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 23	Girls: 6	Total: 29
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 22	Girls: 6	Total: 28
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,000		
Annual fees (boarders)	£228, 000 – £265,000		
Address of school	Wadworth Doncaster South Yorkshire DN11 9AG		
Telephone number	01302 856382		
Email address	Geoff.turner@hesleygroup.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Geoff Turner		
Proprietor	Mr Stephen Lloyd (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.



28 September 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Wilsic Hall School, Doncaster, DN11 9AG

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave to me and Joanne when we inspected your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting you and particularly enjoyed hearing and seeing you sing so enthusiastically in assembly. We found looking at your work, visiting you in your lessons and talking to you and the staff very helpful. We found that your school is providing you with a good quality of education. The reasons for this are:

- the curriculum is outstanding and teachers make sure that the work you do helps you to make good progress, especially in your personal development
- the teaching is good and the support and help you are given to complete and assess your work is helping you to meet your targets
- you behave well in your classes and you work hard to do what the adults ask you to do.

We have suggested some things for your headteacher and staff to do to make things even better for you.

- Improve the consistency of the quality of the work of support staff when supporting learning in classrooms.
- Review the procedures for completing the daily attendance registers in order to better reflect when you attend lessons in the school.

I hope that you continue to do your very best in school and wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Amraz Ali
Her Majesty's Inspector