

Stepping Stones School

Independent school progress monitoring inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell

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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.^{1,2,}

The inspection was conducted at the request of the Registration Authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan following the previous inspection.

Information about the school

Stepping Stones is an independent special day school located in a converted church and grounds close to the centre of Hindhead in a rural part of south-west Surrey. The school, which is owned by a single proprietor, opened in 2004 and is run by a charitable trust. It is registered for up to 30 students aged from eight to 16 years of age with hemiplegia and other forms of moderate physical or learning difficulties. There are currently 27 students on roll aged from nine to 16 years, one of whom is part-time and 22 of whom have a statement of special educational needs. Students are taught in one of four groups, with specialist subject teaching for those in Key Stages 3 and 4. Most students have experienced significant interruptions to their previous education.

The school mission statement is 'to provide a stimulating, caring and friendly learning environment which will maximise the students' educational achievement and their potential for independence'.

Context of the inspection

The school was last inspected in May 2012 and its subsequent action plan was evaluated and approved in October 2012. This is the first visit to the school to follow up its progress in implementing its action plan.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

At the time of the last inspection in May 2012, there were weaknesses in the school's child protection policy and levels of child protection training for staff, including the designated person with overall responsibility for this area. There were also weaknesses in the checks made by the school in relation to the suitability of staff and trustees to work with children. The school's planned action included a revision to the relevant policies and procedures and the planning of training for staff at appropriate levels. The school has now revised its child protection policy to take account of the most recent national guidance and this now includes procedures for

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

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

regular policy review and for dissemination to staff. The roles and responsibilities of staff are clear. The headteacher has completed training in child protection at the required level and all staff have undertaken additional training at the start of this academic year. The recruitment process is now overseen by a trustee who has received appropriate training in safe recruitment.

At the time of the last inspection, the school's health and safety policy and procedures were incomplete and sufficient risk assessments were not undertaken, particularly for practical activities. The school's action plan stated that policies and procedures would be revised so as to meet requirements. The school has revised its health and safety policy and the policy now effectively addresses all aspects of safety at school and off the site. The school has improved its written risk assessment procedures so as to effectively promote the pupils' safety during physical activities on site and also when engaged in the programme of physical education at another local school.

In relation to fire safety, the inspection of May 2012 found that the school lacked an appropriate policy and records of annual fire risk assessments. Records of fire drills were not kept properly and fire marshal training had not been secured. The school's proposed action was to improve its policies, procedures and staff expertise. The school has produced fire risk assessments and improved its record keeping of checks on systems, equipment and evacuation procedures. These are now satisfactory. The school has secured fire marshal training for the headteacher for completion within the next month. All staff have received training in the use of extinguishers from qualified personnel. The inspection also found that the first aid policy had not been reviewed for seven years so that it no longer met requirements and staff training had not been secured at the appropriate level. The school's planned action was to revise its policy and ensure that staff were suitably trained. The school has revised its first aid policy and this now meets requirements. It provides good guidance for staff in the event of accidents or incidents, and records are well maintained. One of the trustees who has a medical background now has responsibility to oversee first aid policy implementation. The school has secured an appropriate three-day first aid course for the headteacher that will commence in three weeks' time. Similar training has been secured for another senior member of staff next term. Most staff have had basic emergency first aid training within the last year.

The last inspection found that the school's admission register was incomplete and its format did not meet requirements. The school planned to use published national guidance to ensure that requirements were met. The school has now replaced its loose-leaf admission register with an electronic version that contains all the required information.

The May 2012 inspection also found that the school did not provide evidence that all members of the proprietorial body (trustees) had been subject to appropriate checks in relation to their identify, suitability and the right work in the UK. Consequently the single central register contained no reference to the checks. Furthermore, the register failed to demonstrate that no staff were barred from working with children. The

school's planned action was to ensure that the required evidence was collated and appropriately recorded. The school has now ensured that all the required checks of suitability and identity, including the right to work in the UK, have been made on staff and trustees. This evidence is appropriately recorded on the single central register and held securely.

The school had a small number of omissions in its information to parents, carers and others. All but one have been remedied. The revised prospectus and website now make all the required information available to parents and carers. Additionally, the required information is displayed in the school foyer. The school has collated information related to income and expenditure in respect of individual pupils but has not yet submitted these accounts as required to the local authorities who place pupils at the school.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

As a result of this inspection, the school must take action to meet The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010³ ('the Regulations'), as follows:

- ensure that an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of any students placed by a local authority is submitted to the local authority and on request to the Secretary of State (paragraph 24(1)(h)).

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

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special for pupils with hemiplegia and other moderate physical and learning difficulties.		
Date school opened	2004		
Age range of pupils	8–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 12	Girls: 14	Total: 26
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 12	Girls: 10	Total: 22
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£11,200 – £14,200		
Address of school	Tower Road Hindhead Surrey GU26 6SU		
Telephone number	01428 609 083		
Email address	enquiries@steppingstones.org.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Neil Clark		
Proprietor	Mr Larry Sullivan		