

Aidenswood

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Saleem Hussain

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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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

Aidenswood is a small, independent special school run by Northern Care which opened in 2004. The school caters for residential students. It provides education and therapy for up to six boys between the ages of 13 and 17 years. Most of their educational needs relate to complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. A few students have a statement of special educational needs. All students who attend the school are referred by their local education authorities. The school aims include,

'to provide a high quality education in a supportive and achieving environment for students not in a mainstream school and to foster their academic and personal development by meeting their needs and giving them the confidence to lead purposeful and enjoyable lives'.

The school has no particular religious affiliation. The school was last inspected in June 2009.

Evaluation of the school

The school provides an outstanding quality of education, meets its aims extremely well and has improved well since the last inspection. The outstanding curriculum, teaching and assessment procedures ensure that students make outstanding progress. The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and this is a significant factor in the students' outstanding behaviour. The school makes outstanding provision for the welfare, health and safety and safeguarding of students. It meets all of the regulations for continued registration as an independent school.

Quality of education

The outstanding curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of students extremely well. This ensures that students of all abilities flourish in their academic and personal development. Comments from students include 'teachers encourage me so much to get qualifications and be the best person that I can be'. The curriculum provides students with rich experiences in all the required

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

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

areas of learning. The school offers external accreditation in many subjects at Entry Level and GCSE. There is a very sharp and relentless focus on developing core skills of reading, writing, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). This lies at the heart of the school's success. GCSE subjects are available for study including English, mathematics, science, ICT, psychology, citizenship, art and preparation for working life. ICT is frequently used to promote learning across the curriculum and each student is provided with his own laptop computer to support his studies.

Personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is very effective and is a major strength of the school. For example, there are many high-quality opportunities for students to develop their awareness and understanding of the impact of their actions on others and the contribution that they can make to the community. Much PSHCE is provided through the school's excellent individual community opportunities programme and experiences (ICOPE). This includes many opportunities for developing self-confidence, resilience, independent living and social skills.

A number of educational visits and visitors enrich learning. For example, students recently went to an open air theatre to see a production of Shakespeare and also enjoy trips to museums. There are very good arrangements for careers education. Preparation for working life enables students to develop their aspirations and they receive strong support from the Connexions service. There are excellent opportunities for students to find out about further education and to gain work related experiences.

The '24 hour' curriculum provides many opportunities for students to enhance their academic and personal development. After-school activities include homework support, independent living skills development and visits which help students to develop their understanding of public institutions and the multicultural nature of society.

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding. Teachers have instilled within students a thirst for learning. There is an excellent learning ethos in the classroom. Teachers know each student's special educational needs and prior attainment extremely well and use this knowledge to plan captivating lessons which provide the utmost challenge for each student. Comments from students include 'first they give me challenging targets. When I achieve those, they push me further and get more out of me'. Teachers possess excellent subject knowledge and they use this to deliver lively, practically oriented and very engaging lessons. The pace of work is excellent. Teachers usually work in tandem, complementing each other's teaching skills perfectly. Students receive intensive individual attention if they do not quite understand any aspect of the work. Relationships between staff and students are excellent. Behaviour management is remarkable. All that is ever needed to maintain discipline and effort in learning is a momentary glance from a teacher and the student concerned immediately corrects his own behaviour. As a result of these factors, students make outstanding progress over time. Learning resources are generally very good in terms of range, quality and quantity. However, science

resources are less good and students would like more for investigations and experiments.

Assessment procedures are very effective. On entry to the school students undertake baseline assessments in key areas of learning. This is followed by frequent assessments and tests for each unit of work. Teachers use national norms and the schools aims effectively to measure progress. Students are provided with very good feedback about their performance verbally and through the marking of workbooks. This ensures that students develop a clear understanding of their attainment and how to improve.

Students achieve extremely well in relation to their capability and starting points. They develop key skills including in reading, writing, speaking, listening, mathematics and ICT very effectively. All students gain a good number of passes in different subjects and good grades in Entry Level and/or GCSE examinations in light of their attainment on entry to the school. These factors ensure that students are extremely well prepared for their future economic well-being. All school leavers in recent years have moved on to further education.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is outstanding. Students are treasured as individuals and treated with respect at all times. This helps them to develop their self-esteem and confidence very well. Comments from students include 'teachers believe in me. I could hardly read when I came here but now I am working towards getting good GCSE's to help me with my future career'.

Teachers take every opportunity to promote moral development through PSHCE, English and other lessons. There are ample opportunities to debate moral dilemmas relating to issues such as human rights. In discussions with the inspector, students demonstrated that they can 'think on their feet' and present admirable moral views on topics such as work/life balance and crime.

There is a very strong camaraderie between students and they interact very effectively with staff and members of the wider community. Social development is excellent. It is nurtured through very well-planned opportunities to help students to learn about the value of forming constructive relationships. Students make excellent progress in developing the personal qualities that will enable them to contribute very effectively to the community and to become very responsible adults. Students often support people in the wider community through undertaking voluntary work and fund-raising for good causes.

Students learn much about their own culture and the beliefs, values and traditions of others. For example, students studied different cultures and nationalities as part of their work around the Olympic Games recently. In psychology they consider how cultural groups perceive things differently. Students show very high levels of tolerance and respect towards the diversity of cultures in modern Britain.

The school is a very calm and orderly community. Attitudes, behaviour, attendance and punctuality are outstanding.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision to promote the overall welfare, health and safety of students is outstanding. Staff are highly committed to ensuring students' well-being and receive comprehensive guidance regarding their roles and responsibilities. All of the required policies and procedures are in place. They are robust and are implemented very effectively. These include detailed policies relating to anti-bullying, behaviour and the health and safety of students in school and on trips. Adults consistently give the highest priority to safeguarding students. The designated officer for child protection and other staff are trained at the required level. Students respond very well to the high expectations regarding their conduct. They value the rewards and certificates on offer for outstanding achievement, behaviour and attendance.

The school carries out detailed health and safety risk assessments for the premises and learning activities. Fire risk assessments are carried out regularly and the statutory requirements are fully met. Students enjoy healthy lifestyles through eating healthily and participating in sports. They learn very well about nutrition and balanced diets. Students adopt many sensible practices to ensure their own safety and say that they feel safe and free from bullying, discrimination or exploitation of any kind. They are very confident about turning to adults for help and support if required.

There are excellent links with outside agencies to ensure the care and welfare of students. For example, students receive specialist one-to-one therapy sessions which support the work done by teachers in tackling inappropriate behaviour and helping students to develop very effective personal strategies to maintain the highest standards of behaviour and personal development.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All the required checks, including Criminal Records Bureau checks, to confirm the suitability of the proprietor and staff, are carried out and meet requirements. The school maintains a single central register as is required.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school's accommodation provides a very good and safe environment for learning. It is comfortable and well decorated and maintained. The accommodation includes a suitably-sized classroom, a small science room and a small ICT room. Students also have use of a large conference room, lounge, dining room and kitchen. Outdoors there is a grassed area which students use for physical education and play. The school makes good use of a local leisure centre to support physical education.

Provision of information

The school provides clear, accurate and up-to-date information for parents, carers and others. It has a very helpful prospectus and there are several opportunities for parents and carers to attend meetings with teachers. The school provides parents, carers and others with good quality written reports regarding attainment, progress and personal development.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints procedures and policy meet all 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').

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Provide additional learning resources for science investigations and experiments.

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 social, emotional and behavioural difficulties		
Date school opened	2004		
Age range of pupils	13–17		
Gender of pupils	Male		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 4	Girls: 0	Total: 4
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 2	Girls: 0	Total: 2
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 4	Girls: 0	Total: 4
Annual fees	£20,540 - £20,800		
Headteacher	Ms Lindy Scott		
Proprietor	Northern Care		

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.



23 November 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Aidenswood School

My thanks to all of you for the discussions we had and your excellent contribution to the inspection of your school. I really enjoyed meeting you. I promised to write to you about what I found out about your school when I had finished the inspection.

The school provides an outstanding quality of education for you. The teaching is outstanding. It makes a huge contribution to your outstanding progress. The work is very closely matched to your needs and interests and this helps each of you to achieve as well as you can. The attention given to developing your basic skills in literacy, mathematics and the development of computer skills is stunning. This prepares you extremely well for the future. The curriculum that your school offers is outstanding. I could see that you never waste time in school and are always learning. Your personal development, including your attitudes and behaviour is outstanding. I'm amazed at how keen you are to learn and how well you are doing. Well done.

The teachers take very good care of you and the arrangements for your welfare, health and safety are outstanding. Teachers work very hard to make sure you develop healthy and safe lifestyles. The staff are keen to make the school even better. Although the learning resources in the classroom are generally very good, I have suggested that resources for science investigations and experiments could be improved. You can help the school by carrying on working as hard as you do.

I know that everyone is very proud of your achievements. I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Saleem Hussain
Lead Inspector