

# Da Capo School

## Independent school standard inspection report

---

DfE registration number	893/6099
Unique Reference Number (URN)	131171
Inspection number	397744
Inspection dates	21–22 November 2012
Reporting inspector	Peter McKenzie



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090070](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090070).

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

No. 090070

© Crown copyright 2012





## **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.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

Da Capo is a small school which provides education for residential boys and girls aged eight to 17 years who live in the children's home on site. All pupils are in the care of the local authority. It caters for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and is owned by Da Capo Caring for Kids Ltd. The school aims to provide integrated therapeutic care and education. This is to provide students with educational and social skills to support further education and life prospects, and to take their place in society as independent adults. The school is located in a rural setting in Shropshire. The school opened in 2006 and is registered for 12 students. All current students have a statement of special educational needs and there are five pupils on roll. The school was last inspected in November 2009.

## **Evaluation of the school**

Da Capo provides its students with an outstanding education, and meets its aims to prepare them for life as independent adults through outstanding provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. An outstanding curriculum, based on individual programmes of study to meet each student's needs, and outstanding teaching are successful in inspiring students to make excellent progress, often from a low starting points. Students benefit from therapeutic support to improve their behaviour which is now outstanding. The school's safeguarding arrangements fully meet requirements. Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. The school meets all the regulations.

## **Quality of education**

The curriculum is outstanding because of its focus on individual programmes of study for each student. The curriculum policy is based on the National Curriculum and meets all the areas of study required by the regulations. This also meets the requirements of students' statements of special educational needs and ensures outstanding progress in their basic skills which are skilfully developed across the curriculum. This policy is developed through outline schemes of work, which are then extended in detail as individual programmes of study and lesson planning. These programmes of study are appropriately based on students' starting points, rather than their age, as most will have experienced gaps in their schooling before coming

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).



to Da Capo. Students above compulsory school age are provided with opportunities at Entry Level and towards the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Gold Award from which they can develop to GCSE and vocational courses at a local college. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, focus mainly on outdoor activity, but also include dance and membership of youth organisations, is a strong feature of the educational and residential experience. Students also have the opportunity to learn the skills of animal husbandry, caring for livestock on site. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is a particular strength of the school and is instrumental in meeting the school's aims. It prepares students effectively for independence in the next stages of their lives. The programme is delivered as a themed day each half term. Work includes aspects of citizenship, such as human rights, how and why laws are made, and how the economy functions. Students learn about careers education within the PSHE programme and undertake a period of work experience. This curriculum highly benefits students who join the school with low self-esteem and who lack social skills. Many students have already progressed successfully to semi-independent living.

Teaching and assessment are outstanding and lead to students' outstanding progress. The significant improvements in students' behaviour and interpersonal relationships make a very significant contribution to their learning and progress. Teaching is largely individual, extremely well matched to what each student needs and helps students to learn with others in pairs and small groups. A significant improvement is the way in which they learn to work things out on their own. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly, based on their detailed knowledge of students' prior attainment. Teachers are enthusiastic and motivate students to try their very best. Progress is monitored rigorously. Senior staff are informed twice a day on the progress students make and their commitment to learning. This information is then used to inform their next steps.

Teaching sustains students' concentration because the lessons often consist of several short activities. Students' use of information and communication technology (ICT), to research their learning, is outstanding. It encourages them to sustain their attention and helps students to present their work clearly and effectively. Students' are given regular homework, and communication between home and school ensures that they are supported to complete their tasks. Work is sometimes traditionally marked with helpful guidance on how to improve but is more often discussed between student and teacher. Teachers make a significant contribution to students' progress but some teachers feel that opportunities to continue to develop their own skills are limited.

The school maintains detailed assessment records both in terms of reading and spelling and National Curriculum levels in basic subjects. Individual records for each student are used well to plan lessons at the appropriate level. Students know what progress they are making and are proud of their achievements. Pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding is regularly reviewed and recorded and used to inform parents and/or carers termly of students' progress.



Students make outstanding progress. The school is highly successful in reintegrating them into a learning culture and in making education and care complement each other. Most of the students enter the school with attainment levels that are well below average. This is often the result of their previous behaviour which has been a barrier to learning, and some students have had extended periods receiving no educational provision at all. Students make dramatic gains in their reading age, exceeding three years' progress in a single year. Attainment is improving rapidly, for example in English and mathematics over half now have current standards in line with the national average despite having very low age-related attainment two years ago. The school's tracking predicts even higher level GCSE grades in mathematics and/or English for most students. They also make excellent progress in other subjects and some students are expected to take GCSE examinations in up to seven subjects. They develop new skills, such as in music, Zumba, a dance fitness programme, and yoga.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

The combination of the school's therapeutic approach, an outstanding PSHE curriculum and a philosophy of seamless education and care provides students with outstanding provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students demonstrate exceptional progress in their behaviour because they have been encouraged to accept responsibility for their actions, support others and enjoy their learning. Supervision sessions with a trained counsellor are based on the student's choice of topics for discussion and lead to huge gains in self-belief and self-respect. As a result, incidents of poor behaviour have been significantly reduced. Students with previously poor attendance now miss little or no schooling. They appreciate being valued and compare Da Capo extremely favourably with previous negative school experiences. They trust and are trusted. The school successfully prepares them for independence in the next stage of their lives. They appreciate music, poetry, dance and art, including work from other cultures. The school emphasises cultural and religious difference very effectively through theory and practice. This involves teaching and learning in PSHE and RE and in visits to and receiving visitors. The school provides opportunities to engage in dance and music, some from other cultures. Despite being a very small school, students raise significant contributions for charity.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

Students' welfare, health and safety of students are outstanding. Policies and procedures comply fully with requirements and create a safe and supportive environment. Risk assessment is effective within the learning environment and to support educational visits. Fire safety risk assessment is fully in place; equipment is appropriately maintained and a fire log records all actions. Safeguarding procedures are fully in place and all required training is completed. The school has effective policy and practice for first aid, including training requirements. Students say that they feel safe in the school. They eat healthily and have many opportunities for exercise, both on-site and at neighbouring facilities.



## **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

Comprehensive procedures to verify the suitability of proprietors, staff and others to ensure their suitability to work with students are fully in place. The school's single central register fully meets the regulations. Policy and practice ensure safer recruitment of staff and volunteers. The school does not employ staff from employment agencies or use contracted staff.

## **Premises and accommodation at the school**

Students are educated in a safe and secure environment. The school is located in a rural setting with significant open space, some of which is used to raise animals and grow crops. There are extensive facilities for outdoor activities. The main school building is a high quality recently purpose-built teaching block. There are classrooms for teaching the schools individualised activities on a one-to-one basis, some in the garden rooms, a detached building in the grounds.

## **Provision of information**

The school has an informative website and provides parents, carers and prospective parents and carers with a detailed brochure. These provide all requisite information and make parents and carers aware of the availability of policies and other documentation. Progress reports are provided termly. The school returns an annual account of income and expenditure to the placing authorities.

## **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The complaints procedure meets regulatory requirements.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all 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 appropriate and tailored training to maintain the high levels of skills and knowledge for all teaching staff.



## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

### 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	✓			
--	---	--	--	--



## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Special: behavioural, emotional and social difficulties		
<b>Date school opened</b>	16 January 2006		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	8 to 18 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 1	Girls: 4	Total: 5
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 1	Girls: 4	Total: 5
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 1	Girls: 4	Total: 5
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£76,000		
<b>Address of school</b>	C/O Da Capo Caring for Kids Ltd, Millview, Church Stretton, SY6 6JG		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01694 724909		
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:john@dacapo.uk.net">john@dacapo.uk.net</a>		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andrew Plant		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Da Capo Caring for Kids Ltd		



**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 Da Capo School, Church Stretton, SY6 6JG**

Thank you for making me welcome when I visited your school recently and especially for talking to me about your work and the school.

You are fortunate to attend an outstanding school. Some of you told me that you had missed some time at school in the past and you arrived at Da Capo with lower standards than many other students of your age. You make outstanding progress, particularly in English and mathematics, which is a result of your hard work and the high quality of the curriculum, teaching and support you have receive. I was also pleased to see your progress in music and yoga and to hear of the excellent work you have done in raising money for charity.

Your school hopes that you will be able to continue to make progress in your personal lives, continue your education and training, find work and become responsible citizens. I am confident that the school is giving you every opportunity to meet these aims. I was so pleased to hear you talk about your ambitions for the future.

To help you even further, your teachers have asked for more training and I have asked the school to make this available for them.

I send my best wishes to you all for your success at Da Capo and in your future lives.

Yours sincerely

Peter McKenzie  
Lead inspector