

Sunfield School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	David Rzeznik

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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

Sunfield School is a residential special school for pupils with complex learning difficulties, including autism and challenging behaviour. It is dually registered as a children's home. A separate inspection was carried out of the residential provision at the same time as the inspection of the school. The school originally opened in 1930 in Selly Oak. It has been on its current site in Stourbridge since 1932 and in its present form since July 1971. It was last inspected in June 2009. The school is registered to admit 72 pupils aged between six and 19 years. There are currently 57 pupils on roll of whom 45 are boarders. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and 40 are looked after. The headteacher was appointed in September 2010 and she leads and manages the education provision. A range of other professionals work in school, including speech and language therapists, occupational, play and music therapists, psychologists, and a psycho therapist and psychiatrist.

The school aims to 'develop each child's abilities, so that they are able to fulfil their own potential and derive the most out of society and life itself.'

Evaluation of the school

The school provides a good quality of education and successfully meets its aim. Most, but not all, regulatory requirements are met. Good teaching, high staff morale, outstanding behaviour and an individualised curriculum that fulfils the objectives and requirements of pupils' statement of special educational needs, enable pupils to achieve well. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Welfare, health and safety procedures, including safeguarding arrangements, are good, which is an improvement since the last inspection. The standard of education has been maintained although a small number of regulations that were met at the time of the last inspection are now unmet.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. Over the past 12 months the curriculum has been substantially revamped for all year groups. There has been a major thrust to link subjects together into themes to make learning more coherent, meaningful and enjoyable. For example, pupils study topics such as the Olympics, landscapes, the

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

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

circus and healthy eating; literacy, numeracy and others subject-specific skills are taught in an integrated, thematic way where it is relevant to do so. Subject-specific skills are also taught discretely, for example, letters and sounds (phonics) work is timetabled each week and mathematics skills are taught using a commercial mathematics scheme. Provision is highly individualised and work is closely linked to the objectives specified in individuals' statement of special educational needs. The work provided is bespoke and is mostly well matched to individuals' capabilities. Good use is made of computers and other technological aids to support learning. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Appropriate curriculum plans exist for all of the required areas of learning and they are suitably implemented. Planning is more 'joined up', integrated and cohesive than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils are very well supported by a range of therapies, including music, creative art, play, speech and language and occupational therapy. Additional support is carefully targeted and is very effective in developing pupils' communication, personal, social and physical skills.

The post-16 curriculum has improved with increased breadth and balance in provision. It is rightly focused on developing pupils' basic skills, personal, social and emotional skills, knowledge and understanding of the world and vocational skills. The range of accredited courses has increased and pupils' gain qualifications, at a variety of levels, in subjects such as life and living skills, horticulture, personal progress, numeracy and information and communication technology. Pupils undertake a good range of work-related learning and for those who are capable, college courses. The farm and café provide real-life work experience not only for the oldest pupils but for others too. Work experience is provided in outside organisations for those who can cope with it.

A wide range of additional learning activities are provided in school and in the residences. Holidays in Wales, outdoor pursuit trips, sailing and visits to theme parks, restaurants and local places of interest help broaden pupils' horizons. Visits by potters, break dancers and circus artists enrich learning and increase pupils' enjoyment.

Teaching and assessment are good and pupils make good progress in their learning given their original starting point. Provision is not outstanding because academic outcomes are not yet outstanding. The strengths in teaching lie in the excellent relationships between adults and pupils and between the pupils themselves. Behaviour management is outstanding and learning is rarely disrupted. Most teaching is good or better but there are pockets of satisfactory teaching. In the most effective lessons, work is challenging, stimulating and is well matched to pupils' abilities and specific needs. Excellent use is made of resources and the imaginative teaching methods used ensure individuals make good or outstanding gains in their learning. Pupils find the work interesting and enjoyable and engage with the activities extremely well. Where teaching is less effective it is mainly because some activities are not pitched at the right level, so individuals' consolidate their learning rather than having it extended. Staff use communication symbols, signing, technological aids and gestures effectively to support learning. However, there are occasions when staff do not get pupils to respond by signing, using gesture, speech or their communication

symbols, to assess their learning or to further develop pupils' communication skills. At the time of the last inspection too many targets were set for pupils and it was not easy for all staff to access pupil progress information. These weaknesses have been rectified. Assessment of individuals' attainment on entry is rigorous. A commercial assessment scheme is used to determine pupils' attainment and progress as they move through the school and performance data is compared against national benchmarks. Individual targets are set and progress towards them is monitored effectively. Staff keep a 'learning journal' which records the activities undertaken and includes comments on individual's achievements and successes. Records do not always clearly identify what targets have been accomplished and what learning objectives have been achieved.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are happy, have very positive attitudes to learning and enjoy school as demonstrated by their good attendance. Provision, in both the school and residences, is extremely good at boosting pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence and improving their behaviour. Behaviour is outstanding. Most of the pupils have very challenging behaviour and the behaviour management methods used are very effective in getting pupils to know right from wrong and to conform to the school's code of conduct. Parents and carers say that education and welfare staff have transformed their children's lives and their child's behaviour has improved beyond all recognition with the ensuing benefits for family life. Relationships between staff and pupils are special and adults have formed a strong bond with the individuals that they teach. Relationships between pupils from different backgrounds are excellent and racial harmony is an important strength of the school.

The school council is making a difference by developing a running track in school and helping to improve the food and menus provided. Pupils help to run the farm and grow produce in the garden, which is then harvested and eaten in meals. Money is raised for good causes and, as part of a horticultural programme, individuals help with grounds maintenance in a local park. Pupils acquire a good understanding of their own and other cultures, through for example, celebrating various religious festivals and studying British literature.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for welfare, health and safety is good. The adult to pupil ratio is very high and pupils are extremely well supervised at all times. Many staff have been trained in first aid and pupils' medical needs are supported effectively by the school nurses. The administration of medicines and the recording of physical restraints are robust. Recruitment and staff vetting arrangements are satisfactory. All staff, including the designated persons for child protection, have been suitably trained at the appropriate level. Procedures to promote outstanding behaviour are very effective and result in a calm environment for learning. Since the last inspection, health and safety arrangements have improved. Risk assessments, including for individuals, the premises and for educational visits, are carried out carefully. Fire safety is good. Fire

drills are completed regularly and the outcomes of evacuations are formally recorded. Fire fighting equipment is subject to regular inspection to ensure that equipment is fully operational. Attendance registers are kept in good order; however the admission register is not maintained in accordance with requirements. Very good provision is made to ensure pupils keep fit and healthy. There are plenty of physical activities, including swimming, outdoor pursuits and sports to ensure pupils get sufficient exercise. Pupils have a balanced diet and eat nutritious, healthy meals.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All of the staff, trustees and others have been suitably recruited and vetted to confirm their suitability to work with children. The recently revised single central register contains all of the required information.

Premises and accommodation at the school

New purpose-built school premises have been built since the last inspection. The accommodation is of high quality. Provision keeps pupils safe and secure and enables effective learning. The school is located in 58 acres of beautiful parkland and the grounds are used extremely well for learning activities, play and recreation. The farm is an excellent resource and is very well used, particularly for work-related learning activities. Classrooms and other teaching spaces, halls, sensory areas and soft play facilities are of a good size. Furniture and fittings are appropriately designed for pupils with complex needs and suitable adaptations have been made to the premises, particularly for those with specific disabilities. The school is clean, tidy and is well maintained. It is decorated to a good standard. There are sufficient washrooms and toilet facilities for staff, pupils and visitors. There are good facilities for those who are ill. The kitchen has been awarded a five star food safety award for its standard of hygiene.

Provision of information

The prospectus, statement of purpose and documents given to parents and carers provide most, but not all, of the required information. For example, parents and carers are not informed that particulars of the number of education staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications are available from the school. Documentation does not make explicit the address and telephone number of the proprietor's registered or principal office or the name and address of the Chair of the Board of Trustees for correspondence purposes. Parents and carers regularly receive good quality newsletters about school life and pupils' achievements and successes. Exit interviews indicate that parents and carers hold the school in high regard. The school does not provide local authorities with an annual account of the income received and the expenditure incurred by school, for pupils that are wholly or partly funded by a local authority.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaint procedure does not contain all of the required information. The areas of non-compliance are specified below. The procedure is made available to parents, carers and others.

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 provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- ensure that the admission register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 17).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- ensure that the proprietor provides the following information to parents, parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate:
 - the address and telephone number of the proprietor's registered or principal office
 - the name and address of the Chair of the Board of Trustees for correspondence (paragraph 24(1)(a)).
- ensure that the following information is made available to parents, parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate:
 - particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations
 - details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year
 - details of the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 24(1)(b)).

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

- ensure that where a pupil is registered at the school, and is wholly or partly funded by a local authority, an annual account of the income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil is submitted to the local authority and on request to the Secretary of State (paragraph 24(1)(h)).

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:

- ensure that the complaints procedure provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulates that a copy of the findings and recommendations are:
 - sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about
 - and
 - available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the headteacher (paragraph 25(i))
- ensure that the procedure provides 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))
- ensure that the procedure provides for all correspondence, statements and records of complaints to be kept confidential (paragraph 25(k)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Ensure that all work is properly matched to pupils' capabilities and all activities enable pupils to make good or better gains in their learning in lessons and over time.
- Ensure that staff actively encourage pupils to use signs, gestures, speech or communication symbols or technological aids to further develop their communication skills and assess their learning.
- Ensure that 'learning journal' records clearly identify what targets have been accomplished and what learning objectives have been achieved.

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	Residential special school for pupils with complex learning difficulties, including autism		
Date school opened	1930		
Age range of pupils	6–19 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 47	Girls: 10	Total: 57
Number of boarders	Boys: 38	Girls: 7	Total: 45
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 47	Girls: 10	Total: 57
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 35	Girls: 5	Total: 40
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 59,734		
Annual fees (boarders)	£ 168,260 (38 weeks) £ 188,295 (52 weeks)		
Address of school	Clent Grove Clent Stourbridge DY9 9PB		
Telephone number	01562 882253		
Email address	carolineb@sunfield.org.uk		
Headteacher	Caroline Bell		
Proprietor	Sunfield Children’s Home Limited		

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.

14 December 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sunfield School, Stourbridge, DY9 9PB



Hello, I am the inspector that visited your school recently. I am writing you a letter to tell you what I found out.

- You get a good education and you are achieving well.
- You are very well cared for and people from different backgrounds get on very well together.
- You are happy, have very positive attitudes to learning and enjoy school life.
- Your behaviour is outstanding and the relationships that you have built up with the adults who support you are excellent.
- Teaching is good and you are extremely well supported, particularly by the music, creative arts and speech and language therapists.
- The school's new premises are excellent and you are so fortunate to have such beautiful grounds to live, work and play in.
- The farm and café are wonderful and it was great to see you taking such good care of the animals and serving others with tea, hot chocolate, cake and toast.

There are some things that I want the headteacher and proprietor to do to make the school even better

- I want all activities to be properly matched to your specific needs so that you make good progress in lessons and over time.
- I want all staff to encourage you to use signs, gestures, speech or communication symbols or technological aids to further improve your communication skills and to assess how well you are doing.
- I want your 'learning journal' records to clearly specify what targets and learning objectives you have achieved.
- I want the complaints procedure, school prospectus and admission register to contain all of the required information.

Thank you for being so welcoming and friendly. I thoroughly enjoyed my visit, particularly to your lessons, especially the farm and the café. A Happy New Year to you, and to all of the staff and your parents, carers and guardians.

Yours sincerely
David Rzeznik
Lead inspector