

The Chelsea Group of Children

Independent school standard inspection report

DfE registration number	212/6001
Unique Reference Number (URN)	131662
Inspection number	408722
Inspection dates	5–6 December 2012
Reporting inspector	John Gush

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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

Chelsea Group of Children is a special school which offers day provision for 28 pupils aged between four and 11 years. All pupils experience developmental delay and have mild to moderate complex learning needs. Over half have autism and almost all have a statement of special educational needs.

The school opened in 1997 and in 2011 relocated to a new site in a residential area of south London, using its new premises to create what it sees as a family-orientated learning environment. Pupils are placed at the school by a number of London boroughs. Two children are in the Early Years Foundation Stage, neither of whom is in receipt of nursery-funded education. The school was last inspected in November 2009.

The school's motto is 'I do not fear stormy seas for I have learned to sail my boat', and it aims to 'meet each pupil's unique, developmental, behavioural and emotional needs and develop their cognitive abilities through the development of a firm foundation of skills'.

Evaluation of the school

The Chelsea Group of Children provides an outstanding quality of education and this enables its pupils to make outstanding progress. This is because of the very high quality therapeutic curriculum and the outstanding teaching and assessment which ensure that the very varied learning needs of every individual are very well met. The school makes outstanding provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils and this helps them to improve their behaviour, which is good. While, in many ways the school cares well for the pupils, the provision for safeguarding and for their welfare, health and safety is inadequate. This is because it has failed to check that all members of staff are suitable to work with children and it has not developed sufficiently robust recording procedures to guarantee the protection of pupils whose behaviour leads to their being physically restrained. The school has improved its quality of education since the previous inspection and most regulations are met, although some welfare requirements are unmet.

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

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

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding. It provides an excellent range of therapeutic and academic opportunities and this enables the school to meet the very different learning needs of all pupils. Pupils are grouped in small classes of three to five according to their level of development rather than their age, and, except for those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, are taught by subject specialists. This makes it possible for individual pupils to learn with their group and to receive specific individual attention related to their particular capabilities.

The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is appropriately adapted for children's learning needs, ensuring that they have excellent opportunities to work towards national expectations. The curriculum for older pupils makes excellent provision for all National Curriculum subjects, together with a very good course in personal, health and social education which is delivered through a weekly lesson as well as being integrated into other subjects. Religious education is also very effectively integrated into many other subjects. All pupils are taught numeracy and literacy every day and pupils' basic skills are enhanced through therapeutic and practical lessons. All pupils receive regular occupational therapy and speech and language therapy from full-time therapists and provision is effective in meeting individuals' specific needs. The specialists make a valuable contribution to the school's understanding of the pupils' learning needs. Music therapy is provided for all pupils. It makes use of the excellent information and communication technology equipment so that pupils can upload the music that they make as well as storing their written music work. Much enjoyed trips and visits to museums, churches and other places of interest supplement the curriculum very well indeed and also provide excellent opportunities for the development of social skills. The curriculum, and the way it is implemented, ensures that the requirements of the pupils' statements of special educational needs are met.

Teaching and assessment are outstanding. The teachers, who have relevant specialist qualifications, work with very effective lesson plans that make use of their detailed knowledge of each pupil's particular needs and abilities. Individual goals and targets are described in the very helpful individual education plans that are drawn up for each pupil, in consultation with the therapists, and to which all teachers refer. Teachers' warmth and enthusiasm provide an outstanding learning environment for the pupils and are matched by those of the teaching assistants, who are very well deployed and are very good at promoting individuals' imagination and initiative. Teachers, assistants and therapists meet regularly in very effective teams to assess individuals' progress and to ensure that provision in the various subjects reflects the overall targets set for each pupil. A very useful process of teachers sharing and reviewing goals and targets electronically ensures that pupils receive coherent support for their skills development and that progress can be effectively tracked and assessed. The school is continuing to improve the processes used to ensure the accuracy of the attainment levels assigned to pupils.

Pupils make outstanding progress in their work and in their social interaction, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is reflected in the quality of

the work in their folders and in the way they respond in lessons as well as in the records of achievement kept by the school. It is also reflected in the numerous comments made by parents and carers. These are well summed up by one parent who wrote that her son 'has made progress that we would have found difficult to believe possible' since he has been at the school.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding. Attendance and punctuality are excellent and those pupils who are able to do so say how much they enjoy the various activities at school, with the weekly cooking and movement lessons chosen as strong favourites. Those pupils who cannot communicate verbally show their enjoyment and the development of their self-esteem through the interest and willingness that they show for their activities and the delight they display with their achievements. All pupils learn the importance of tolerance and consideration for each other through the excellent example set by the staff members.

Regular 'community outings' that have recently included visits to the local railway station, supermarket, library and recycling centre are very effective in introducing pupils to many aspects of their local community and help them appreciate how they can take part in community life. The personal, health and social education curriculum, together with discussions with the local police officers, enable them to learn about English institutions and services. A wide range of nationalities and backgrounds are represented amongst the pupils and staff and festivals from many cultures are celebrated in school. A culture of openness and tolerance pervades the school. This was very clear during the preparations for the school's Christmas play, where all the pupils had opportunities to perform and to help each other to do so.

Pupils' behaviour in the school is good overall. Although many of the pupils experience unpredictable and volatile emotional states, which sometimes lead to angry outbursts and disruptive behaviour, they rarely disrupt the learning and progress of others. Some pupils are developing awareness of their difficulties and their self-control is improving.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is inadequate because, although the school has devised a range of suitable policies and procedures to protect the pupils, not all of these are properly implemented. While the school has a clear child protection policy, and all staff have undergone safeguarding training at the appropriate level, guidance is not implemented effectively. For example, the school does not carry out all of the necessary checks on staff who have lived outside the United Kingdom or checks on other persons to ensure their suitability to work with children. There is an appropriate policy concerning the management of behaviour, including the use of reasonable force, and during the inspection, it was clear that

staff were following guidance to ensure pupils behaved well. However, although the school keeps records in connection with the limited number of occasions when physical restraint is used to ensure the safety of pupils, the records do not contain the necessary information about when, how and for how long physical restraint has been used. There is insufficient detail in the recording of incidents and of any follow-up actions taken by the school, including referral to parents, carers or other relevant agencies. It is therefore impossible to verify that the policy is implemented correctly with regard to the conduct of staff involved in an incident of physical restraint or in connection with referral and follow-up actions.

Policies to counter bullying and to ensure health and safety on educational visits are effectively carried out. Fire safety procedures and health and safety risk assessments are in place. Regular fire drills take place and these are formally recorded. All fire safety equipment is maintained regularly and appropriate fire signage is in place. The first-aid policy meets requirements and all members of staff are appropriately trained in first aid, including those responsible for the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils are encouraged to be aware of their safety and their health. They eat healthily in school and take regular exercise through the programme of physical education and movement lessons.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school carries out most, but not all, of the required checks. Those that are carried out are recorded in the single central register. The school has not made the required checks on all staff from overseas, including those employed from an agency. Consequently, this information is not recorded in the central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school is located in a converted church hall that has been imaginatively refurbished to produce a learning environment that is both welcoming and homely and enables effective learning. Classrooms and therapy rooms are exceptionally well equipped with a wide range of educational aids and electronic equipment.

The premises are effectively secured and a quiet grassed play area is situated at the rear of the building. This provides safe opportunities for play, relaxation and environmental education. It is supplemented by the regular use of a local park only a short walk away from the school.

The premises, environment and equipment in use are suitable for the number of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and take into account the particular requirements associated with children who experience developmental delay.

Provision of information

All of the required information for parents, carers and others is provided, or is made available on request, through the school's website and blog, its prospectus and

through additional information available from the school office. Parents and carers receive detailed attainment and progress reports each academic year and can attend an annual parents' evening. Parents and carers particularly appreciate the 'Parentlink'. This is a weekly email from the school that outlines the lesson plans and learning objectives each pupil is working on and is supplemented by a wealth of anecdotal information about the pupil's activities and progress during the preceding week.

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 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 arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and that these arrangements have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 7)
- ensure that there is a written policy to promote good behaviour amongst pupils which sets out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving, and that this policy is implemented effectively (paragraph 9).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors (standards in part 4) and must:

- ensure that for appointments from **1 May 2007** only, in the case of any person for whom, by reason of living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, obtaining a CRB certificate is not sufficient to establish his or her suitability to work in a school, further checks are made as the proprietor considers appropriate which have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 19(2)(d))
- ensure that any person offered for employment by an employment business to the school only begins work at the school after receiving written notification that the following check was made, including the date each check was completed or certificate obtained:
 - in the case of any person for whom, by reason of living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, further checks have been made as the

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

proprietor consider appropriate which have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 20(2)(a))

- ensure that the proprietor has included in any contractual arrangements with an employment business, the requirements set out in paragraphs 20(2)(a), including a requirement to supply a copy of a CRB certificate that contains any disclosures (paragraph 20(2)(d))
- ensure that, for each member of staff appointed on or **after** 1 May 2007, the register shows that the following checks were made, including the date on which each check was completed or the certificate obtained: in the case of any person for whom, by reason of living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, further checks have been made which have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 22(3))
- ensure that, for each member of staff appointed at any time **before** 1 May 2007, the register shows that the following checks have been made, including the date on which each check was completed or the certificate obtained: in the case of any person for whom, by reason of living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, further checks have been made which have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 22(4))
- ensure that, in relation to staff not directly employed by the school, the register shows whether written notification has been received from the employment business that it has carried out the checks referred to in 20(2)(a), together with the date the written notification that each check was made or certificate obtained was received. Checks required include: in the case of any person for whom, by reason of living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, checks in regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 22(5)).

In order to comply with the welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the school must:

- ensure that it has effective systems in place to ensure that practitioners, and any other person who is likely to have regular contact with children (including those living or working on the premises) are suitable
- ensure that it keeps a record of any occasion where physical intervention is used, and must inform parents and carers on the same day, or as soon as reasonably practicable, of the restraint.

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	Day special school for pupils with mild to moderate complex learning needs		
Date school opened	1997		
Age range of pupils	4–11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 19	Girls: 9	Total: 28
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 16	Girls: 8	Total: 24
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£26,925		
Address of school	St Andrews Church Hall Waynflete Street Earlsfield London SW18 3QG		
Telephone number	020 8946 8330		
Email address	information@chelseachildren.com		
Headteacher	Jessica Duemler		
Proprietor	Libby Hartman		

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.



7 December 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Chelsea Group of Children, London SW18 3QG

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I visited your school this week. Your school provides an outstanding quality of education and I very much enjoyed seeing you working so hard and making such excellent progress. The teaching you receive is outstanding. This is mostly because your teachers and teaching assistants, as well as the therapists, know so much about what each of you needs to do to learn and make progress.

Safeguarding procedures and arrangements for your welfare, health and safety are inadequate. There are a number of things that the school must do to put things right. The headteacher and proprietor must make sure that that all of the required checks on staff are undertaken and that detailed records are kept of any occasion when any of you are physically restrained.

I was very pleased to see all the preparation that went into the excellent performance of your Christmas play and the confidence that each of you showed in your performances. This was a good example of the outstanding way the school helps you with your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Your behaviour is good and many of you are making a real effort to improve, even when it is difficult. Well done! Your teachers, assistants and therapists will help you with this. Do not forget to listen carefully to what they say. This will help you to improve your behaviour and to learn to the best of your ability.

I hope that you will continue to work hard in school and to prepare well for your future.

Yours sincerely

John Gush
Lead inspector