

Woodspring School

Ebdon Lane, Weston-super-Mare, BS22 7YA

Inspection dates

13–14 March 2013

Overall effectiveness

	Adequate	3
Pupils' achievement	Adequate	3
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Adequate	3
Quality of curriculum	Adequate	3
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Adequate	3

Summary of key findings

This school is adequate because

- The quality of teaching is adequate rather than good because it is not consistently bringing about good academic achievement for the students.
- Although there are adequate procedures for assessing students' learning and the monitoring of teaching, they are not yet robust enough to bring about good or better improvement.
- Students do not always know the next steps they need to take in order to learn rapidly.
- The curriculum, though adequate in many respects, is not always precisely adapted to meet the needs of all the students.
- The proprietor and the school's management team have begun to take robust action to address weaknesses but they are only just beginning to have positive effect.

The school has the following strengths

- Behaviour is good and students feel secure because staff promote their well-being and safety and skilfully manage the students, especially when they become upset.
- There is very good communication between the staff in the students' homes and school staff which means that there is a consistency of approach to help students make good progress in their personal development.
- Classroom staff have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach and are strongly committed to bringing about improvements in the quality of their own teaching and students' achievement.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school requires improvement and must take action to meet schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards'). The details are listed in the full report.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with half a day's notice.
- The inspector observed three lessons taught by three different teachers, all of which were joint observations with the headteacher designate. Discussions were held with members of the school's management team, the proprietor, students and a number of members of staff.
- A wide range of school documentation was viewed, including schemes of work and teachers' planning, records of students' progress, examples of students' work, and policy documents.
- The inspector took account of the views expressed in questionnaires from three members of staff.

Inspection team

Mick Megee, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Woodspring School, formerly known as 'Woodspring School and Resource Centre', is an independent, co-educational, special school for students aged from 11 to 16 years of age. It has four students on roll, one of whom is part-time. All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school accepts students who are disaffected young people with a history of disrupted schooling including those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). Students are admitted with a range of additional difficulties such as autism spectrum disorder and specific learning difficulties.
- The school is owned by Crossways Care Limited, a company that provides residential care in eight homes in the Somerset and South Gloucester areas. The school provides education for students who are in the residences, which are located some distance from the school.
- The school is located in rented premises, occupying a small cluster of converted barns on the outskirts of Weston-super-Mare in North Somerset. The school makes use of additional provision, namely the swimming pool, sports centre and further education college in the town.
- The current headteacher has resigned with effect from the end of the Spring Term 2013, and a new headteacher has been appointed and will take up the post for the Summer Term 2013. The current headteacher was not present in the school during the inspection. However, the headteacher designate was present during the inspection.
- The school aims to provide a consistent and personalised educational experience in an atmosphere of trust where each individual feels protected, understood and valued.
- The school opened in April 2012 and this is its first inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring that:
 - teachers make better use of assessment information to carefully adapt work so that activities present exactly the right level of challenge for each student
 - teachers adjust their teaching to meet the students' individual learning targets and the next learning steps they need to take, particularly in improving students' numeracy and literacy skills.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the headteacher frequently checks the quality of teaching
 - there are good procedures in place for establishing the students' starting points when they arrive; for assessing their progress as they move up through the school; and for comparing their progress to the progress made by other students nationally.
- The school must meet the following regulations.
 - Ensure that all the required information has been made available to parents of students and parents of prospective students (paragraph 24(1)(b)).
 - Ensure that the safeguarding children policy is published on the school's website (paragraph 24(1)(c)).

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Adequate

The quality of students' achievement is adequate. Students join the school with levels of literacy and numeracy that are low for their age, and there is undoubted improvement in these levels as students rediscover their confidence and enjoyment in learning. In lessons, students sometimes make good progress. However, more often, the activities provided by teachers are not always sufficiently challenging and this means that overall, progress is adequate rather than good. An important reason for weaknesses in progress is that teachers do not yet have enough evidence about students' progress so that they do not adjust their teaching precisely enough to meet students' needs.

When asked to read out loud, students do so with confidence and for the most part with understanding. Students' files and workbooks show that they are making adequate improvement in their spelling, punctuation and presentation. They are increasingly confident in mathematics, especially in all forms of number. Wall displays show students undertaking demanding outdoor physical work, and art displays show students' careful attention to detail. Students who attend work-related programmes at the local college in Year 11 make adequate progress. They enjoy these courses and acknowledge that this is preparing them well for the future.

All students have the opportunity to gain qualifications in Key Stage 4, including GCSE, Functional Skills or Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) qualifications. Their achievement to date in relation to these qualifications is adequate. There is no discernible difference in the rates of progress of boys and girls, or of any other groups. Evidence from students' work suggests that students who are attending the school part time are also making adequate progress.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

The behaviour and personal development of students are good and most students have improved their self-confidence and develop positive attitudes towards learning in a short period of time. Staff in both the residences and the school communicate very well with each other daily and apply the school's behaviour policy consistently and effectively. Consequently, students quickly learn to accept responsibility for their behaviour and actions and to remain in control when they become anxious or upset. The school's records show that there is a significant reduction in the number of behavioural incidents the longer the students remain at the school.

Students' attendance is generally good, and often there has been a dramatic improvement when compared with their previous schools. Students walk around the school calmly and safely and are mostly courteous and respectful during the lessons. Skilful management by classroom staff means that they concentrate on their work for increasingly longer periods of time. The school's personal, social and health education programme (PSHE) is woven well into lessons throughout the day, and involves students in discussions on how to respect the law and helps them understand the roles of different public institutions. There are close links with a range of relevant health services, including a child psychologist and therapists. Students learn about different cultures in their citizenship and history lessons. They are appropriately taught to appreciate their own culture and respect others who are different from them. No inappropriate language, such as swearing or racist language, was heard during the inspection. As a result of all these positive elements, students' spiritual, moral, social and emotional development is good.

Quality of teaching

Adequate

The quality of teaching is adequate. It is not yet good because it is not having a consistently good

impact on students' academic achievement and assessment is not used as effectively as it could be to plan lessons which meet all students' needs.

Lessons are usually taught on a one-to-one basis. Teachers know their subjects well and work hard to provide activities that relate closely to students' individual interests. Their lesson planning is detailed and sets out precisely what is to be achieved. Classroom support staff, sometimes assisted by staff from the care homes, are gentle and tolerant as they encourage the students and offer prompt assistance. Students respond well and show respect to the adults.

While the students know what each lesson is about, teachers do not sufficiently emphasise in every lesson how the students can make progress in their basic skills or refer frequently enough to students' individual learning targets. This prevents teaching from being good and holds students back from taking control of their own learning and moving forward more rapidly. Teachers record students' progress in each lesson, and parents and carers receive reports each term. However, this assessment information is not collected and analysed sufficiently well in order to identify where further improvement is required and to obtain a clear picture of how well students are doing compared with others nationally. This means that teachers sometimes provide activities that are too easy or too difficult for the students. The school does not establish firmly enough the students' starting points in their learning when they join the school. The school has already recognised this issue and teachers are testing different commercial schemes and plans to use the most suitable shortly.

Quality of curriculum

Adequate

The school provides the students with access to a range of subjects which cover all the required areas of learning. However, overall, the quality of the curriculum is adequate rather than good because it is not always adapted by teachers to match exactly the capabilities of all the learners. This is almost exclusively the case in the teaching of National Curriculum subjects. For example, plans are not in place to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects. These issues have recently begun to be addressed by the school's leaders.

Nevertheless, despite these weaker aspects, the curriculum has many positive features. There is detailed planning for each subject with clear schemes of work so that learning in each subject builds up increasingly from year to year. Teachers conscientiously take account of any new developments.

Staff work hard to provide an interesting range of learning experiences and are aware of the need for flexibility in meeting students' needs. There are good examples of this taking place in outdoor education and art and design. They successfully use specialist methods for students who require them, such as those with autism. Where appropriate, students attend lessons at the local college, a sports centre and swimming pool, accompanied by members of staff. Students are prepared well for leaving school by being given the opportunity to achieve appropriate and meaningful qualifications, as well as through the good links with the local careers service. Students take part in work-related learning in real workplaces. The school also offers small-scale work experience on its own site, for example in looking after the goats and ducks that are housed there. The parent company provides a regular and interesting programme of after-school activities that are undertaken by both education and care staff.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Good

The arrangements for the students' welfare, health and safety are good and the school meets all the regulations for this standard. Suitable procedures and policies are in place. These are clear and are well understood by staff. They include policies on child protection, health and safety, behaviour

and anti-bullying. The school has made sure that all staff, including the school's designated officers responsible for safeguarding, have received training in the protection of children at the proper levels and within the required timescales. The school makes sure that all new staff are conversant with all aspects of safeguarding as soon as they join the school. Students say that they feel safe and that there is no bullying, and no incidents are recorded. Students are well supervised.

There is a detailed safeguarding and safer recruitment policy that is very well implemented and the results of the necessary checks are properly recorded in a single central register. Risk assessments are carried out thoroughly for the school premises including for fire safety and for off-site activities. The school makes thorough, regular checks on fire safety, premises evacuations and electrical equipment as required and keeps detailed records.

The school encourages students to refrain from smoking and to eat healthily. Students receive a suitable amount of physical exercise through weekly visits to the local sports centre, a swimming pool and a comprehensive programme of outdoor pursuits, including long nature rambles.

Leadership and management

Adequate

The quality of the school's leadership and management is adequate. The daily management of the school is smooth and mostly effective. However, leadership is not yet good because the improvements that the proprietor is putting in place are only just beginning to take effect.

The proprietor has been aware for some time that the school was not moving forward as fast as is necessary. For example, there was some monitoring of teaching by the school's managers in the past, but it was not regular enough. Consequently, staff were unclear about how they could strengthen the curriculum and their own performance in order to improve what was offered to students. To address this and other matters, the proprietor has already taken some robust steps, including the replacement of key staff, the introduction of checks on the quality of teaching, initiating promising improvements in the use of assessment information and by making positive changes to the curriculum.

The proprietor has taken good care to see that there is very good communication between the school and the care staff, through regular meetings and robust handover arrangements. This has meant that the staff and carers work well together as a team to provide the students with a consistently safe and calm experience of education, often for the first time in their lives. This has contributed significantly to students' good personal development.

Attendance is now monitored and discussed regularly and there are detailed reports to parents and carers each term on how well the students have done. The school has developed an attractive prospectus and has its own section on the company's website. However, not all the required information for parents and carers is included in either place. The arrangements for the management of any complaints meet requirements. The accommodation is of good quality, and the teaching rooms have been newly decorated offering a pleasant and safe environment in which to learn.

The proprietor has ensured that all but two of the independent school regulations are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	138132
Inspection number	408693
DfE registration number	8028/6010

This inspection was carried out 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.

Type of school	Special School
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	11–16 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	4
Number of part time pupils	1
Proprietor	Jayne Hicks
Headteacher	Tony Wilkinson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£27,500
Telephone number	01934 707578
Fax number	01884 251003
Email address	info@crosswayscare.co.uk

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