

# March House

Co Castlecare, Squires Hill, Kettering, NN14 6BQ

<b>Inspection dates</b>	27–28 November 2013	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### This school is good because

- Students' achievements are good despite disrupted educational experience before starting at the school and substantial barriers to learning. This is made possible by good teaching and the use of an effective curriculum.
- Students behave well in school. They receive excellent support from a dedicated staff team and make good use of the school's therapeutic provision.
- Teachers assess students' abilities well and use their understanding of students' learning styles to provide effective lessons that help them to make good progress.
- Outstanding provision for students' welfare health and safety ensures a secure and nurturing learning environment that supports students' academic progress and their personal development.
- Good leadership and management of the school ensure that the teaching and care available provide good opportunities for students to learn and progress. It has enabled the school to maintain the quality of the provision since the last inspection and demonstrates the ability to improve further.

### It is not yet outstanding because

- Students do not always make the progress they could because of the difficulties they experience with learning and because of some shortcomings with teaching and the use of the curriculum.
- The curriculum does not provide all the opportunities it could to support students to develop the skills they need to prepare for adult life.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets 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') and associated requirements.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with a day's notice. The inspector observed five lessons taught by the school's teachers, looked at students' work, and held meetings with the head teacher, staff members and students.
- The inspector looked at the school's documentation including schemes of work, teachers' planning, records of students' progress, monitoring reports of teaching and learning, records of lesson observations, and staff training records.
- Six questionnaire responses from staff were taken into account but no parents or carers, students or local authority representatives had responded to the on-line Ofsted questionnaires

## Inspection team

John Gush, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- March House is a small special school that provides full-time education for boys aged between 11 and 17 years. All of the students reside in residential accommodation provided by the proprietor. The school opened in August 2005 and it was last inspected in October 2010.
- None of the students currently on the school's roll has a statement of special educational needs. Students are placed at the school in relation to severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and all students are looked after by their local authorities.
- The school uses a local leisure centre and swimming pool to provide students with opportunities for physical education.
- The school's aims include building students' self-esteem, ensuring that they realise their full educational potential and enabling them to move on to further education or training when they leave school.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve aspects of leadership and management especially so that teachers are better able to help all students achieve their best by:
  - ensuring students always know what is expected of them and are appropriately challenged in lessons
  - ensuring learning targets for literacy and numeracy are challenging and precise and fully reflect students' academic abilities and aspirations
  - developing the provision for older students to better prepare them for adult life, particularly with regard to employability skills and awareness of vocational options.

## Inspection judgements

### Pupils' achievement

**Good**

Students' achievements are good. This is in spite of very disrupted educational experiences before starting at the school and experiencing substantial barriers to learning. This achievement is made possible by good teaching and the use of an effective and flexible curriculum and the valuable support for their learning and personal development from very effective therapeutic provision. Their achievements are good rather than outstanding because of the difficulties they experience with learning and because of some shortcomings with teaching and the use of the curriculum. Students quickly catch up with learning that they have missed and make greater than expected progress in their limited time at the school. They take pride in their work, which is well presented in their books and which has recently won one student an achievement award from his local authority. They achieve well in all subjects but especially in English and mathematics, where they use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to support their learning.

Students take advantage of opportunities to gain valuable qualifications in English and mathematics through the Functional Skills awards. This enables them to move on to appropriate further education when they leave the school. All the students who left the school in the year preceding the inspection achieved qualifications that exceeded expectations from their starting points and have transferred to appropriate further education.

### Pupils' behaviour and personal development

**Good**

Students behave well in school and make good progress in their personal development. The school provides an effective learning environment. Behaviour is not outstanding because of occasional difficulties students experience as a result of the impact of troubled emotional lives. However, on these occasions staff members support them very well and the learning of others is not adversely affected. Students say that they now enjoy school, and for many of them this is the first time they have done so. One student commented that he surprised himself when he realised that he was enjoying his schoolwork. Their attendance is very good and above the national average, and they are almost always punctual to their lessons.

The school makes good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. All staff contribute very well to the culture of understanding and mutual respect which helps the students to become more self-confident and sociable. Through the school's culture days as well as regular lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE), students gain a good awareness of some important features of other cultures. For example, students have recently experienced the cultures of South Africa and Ireland through stories and food, while a visit to a local mosque led to a study of Islamic mathematics. These activities help students to develop a deeper understanding of and tolerance towards difference, which helps them to understand the importance of appropriate behaviour and relationships.

Students learn about British institutions and services through citizenship, history and English lessons. They develop their understanding of right and wrong, and learn about civil and criminal law. They take an active part, with other students and staff members, in community meetings. This allows them to be involved in decision-making about the school and about their residence. They raise money for Hearing Dogs for Deaf People through activities such as a plant and book sale, and have recently held a coffee morning and cake sale for MacMillan Care. These activities build very good relationships with the local community, and help the students to develop the attitudes and skills they need to take an active part in a democratic and multicultural society. The school ensures that, when political issues are raised, balanced views are always presented.

**Quality of teaching****Good**

The quality of teaching is good and enables students to make good progress in their academic learning and personal development. In most lessons teachers and their assistants have high expectations of what students can achieve. They use effective methods to help students overcome their particular difficulties in learning, so they can make the most of their abilities, especially in literacy and numeracy. When students have statements of special educational needs, these are carefully analysed and teaching ensures that requirements are fulfilled.

Through the effective use of assessments teachers know the capabilities and learning styles of the students well. The school makes effective checks on students' progress over time in different subjects and this aids teachers' ability to help students make progress. However, learning targets for literacy and numeracy are not always challenging or precise enough to fully reflect students' academic abilities and aspirations.

Teachers make good use of their subject knowledge to enthuse and inspire students and they use ICT well to stimulate learning. However, in a small minority of teaching, students are not very clear about what they are expected to do and the work is not sufficiently challenging for all students. As a result, their progress is sometimes slower. Teaching assistants provide good support; their enthusiasm and the valuable relationships they develop with students have a very positive impact on most students' learning.

Students' work is neatly presented and regularly marked. Most marking is helpful to the students by praising effort, reinforcing learning and giving guidance on improvement.

**Quality of curriculum****Good**

The curriculum is good and enables students to make good progress. It is not outstanding because some older students would benefit from more opportunities to explore vocational options and to develop their employability skills further.

The curriculum is built around the National Curriculum subjects as well as programmes for PSHE, citizenship and religious education. In addition it makes use of ASDAN courses (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) to support independent living. The curriculum planning provides a good basis for teaching and for students to use their developing literacy and numeracy skills across most subjects. Students learn how to keep safe and to recognise threats and dangers through the very well designed personal, social and health education (PHSE) programme. This enables students to explore issues such as drugs and relationships and effectively supplements the therapeutic provision that is available for all students. The importance of a healthy diet is emphasised in the curriculum for both science and PHSE, and students use this knowledge well when they help to choose the menus for the meals provided by the school.

Students enjoy a good range of physical education activities, including swimming and using the trampoline, and these activities have a good impact on improving their health and fitness. Regular outings, such as to museums and local places of interest extend students' knowledge of their locality and of aspects of the wider world. Appropriate advice about future options is provided for students through regular meetings with their key staff, through lessons and visits from a careers adviser.

**Pupils' welfare, health and safety****Outstanding**

The school makes outstanding provision for the welfare, health and safety of its students. All the requirements of the independent school regulations are met for this standard. Staff members provide excellent, consistent care, and the valuable and respectful relationships between students and staff provide very good opportunities for students to settle quickly into the school and to make

good progress in their academic and personal development.

Great care is taken over staff recruitment, and all the required checks are carried out to ensure the suitability of staff to work with young people. The required single central register is maintained correctly. Robust safeguarding arrangements include regular training for all staff in child protection, physical intervention, fire safety, health and safety and first aid. The designated child protection officer has received the required higher level training. Robust policies for safeguarding, fire safety and first aid meet requirements and are effectively implemented.

The school has very clear and effective policies to support appropriate behaviour and to counter bullying. Students are very aware of the school's arrangements to ensure that bullying does not take place, and these are regularly raised in lessons and meetings. Students have recently revised the school's statement of rules and expectations for behaviour, and a clear statement about avoiding bullying is prominent in the new list. Students also say that they are confident in the staff members' ability to deal effectively with bullying. In addition, students take part in individual training to learn about on-line bullying, the potential dangers associated with social media sites and the inappropriate use of text messaging. This provides them with valuable support to help them to build the resilience they need to deal with such situations, should they occur.

Students say that they feel safe in school and that they receive excellent support and guidance. Supervision in school is provided in an effective and good-humoured manner, which students appreciate. Risk assessments, including those for visits outside school, are carried out diligently.

## Leadership and management

## Good

The leadership and management of the school are good. Leaders have ensured that teaching is good and that students are enabled to make good progress both in their academic and personal development and that all the regulations for independent schools are met.

The school's therapeutic approach to learning and personal development is strongly promoted by the school's proprietor and by the headteacher. These views are shared and understood by the whole school community and this has a positive impact on students' achievements.

The headteacher has carefully evaluated the quality of teaching and accurately assessed the school's strengths and areas for development. Strengths include new arrangements for teachers in the different schools operated by the proprietor to work together on assessment techniques and to evaluate one another's lessons. This provides them with effective and helpful support to enhance the quality of their performance as teachers. The provision of high quality training for learning support assistants also has a valuable impact on improving student outcomes. The school's development plan identifies appropriate areas for action to improve teaching and the curriculum so that all students can make the most of their time at the school. These include helping teachers to improve aspects of lesson planning, sharpening learning targets and improving some features of the provision for older students.

The premises provide suitable learning facilities including classrooms that are light and airy, and are generally well resourced, including with suitable ICT resources. The premises and accommodation are maintained to a good standard. All the required information for parents, carers and others is provided or made available through the proprietor's website and the school's brochure. The complaints procedure meets regulatory requirements and is correctly implemented.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	131701
<b>Inspection number</b>	422730
<b>DfE registration number</b>	873/6040

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	14–15
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	2
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Castle Homes Ltd
<b>Headteacher</b>	Marion Paige
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 October 2010



Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

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 St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2013

