



Office for Standards  
in Education

## New Horizon Centre

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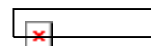
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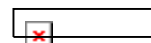
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## INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

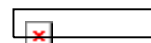


### Purpose and scope of the inspection



This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

### Information about the school

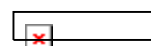


New Horizon Centre is an independent day special school for up to 12 boys and girls between the ages of 11 to 16 years. All pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties and a few of these have additional needs, such as specific learning difficulty and hearing impairment. The aim of the school is to provide a safe environment in which young people change and grow by experiencing success. Pupils are only admitted if no suitable local authority provision is available and the school insists that clear targets are agreed by all supporting agencies before a pupil arrives at the school.

The school is situated in the village of North Petherton, on the main road between Taunton and Bridgwater. Final registration status was given by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in 2003.

Of the 12 pupils on roll, three are girls. All pupils are accommodated by the parent company (New Horizon Centre Ltd) in small group homes within Somerset and are brought to the school each day by staff from those homes. Pupils are referred to the company by local authorities throughout the whole of England and all are considered as having special needs. Six pupils have a statement of special educational need.

### Summary of main findings



This is a good school which meets successfully the complex needs of its pupils. The headteacher provides clear and effective leadership which has given staff a common sense of purpose and direction. This is reflected in the attitudes of pupils, who make good progress in managing their behaviour and who leave the school well equipped to face new challenges. Pupils benefit from a consistency of support which enables them to make sense of their lives. This support is characterised by very good relationships between staff and pupils. The accommodation, though ageing, is used well by staff to create an environment which supports pupils' learning. Currently the parent company is seeking alternative premises in which to expand its work.

### What the school does well:

- 
- It provides a safe and welcoming environment which gives pupils a growing confidence to learn;
  - staff manage very well the severely challenging behaviour of all pupils;
  - by the time they leave, pupils are well prepared for their next phase of learning;
  - individual tuition for all pupils enables them to make significant gains in behaviour and learning when compared to their starting point on admission; and
  - pupils' health, welfare and safety are high priorities.

### What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations:

- 
- Introduce a framework for assessing pupils' achievements and ensure that information from this is taken into account in the planning of all lessons.
  - provide an increased range of opportunities for pupils to learn about cultures other than their own;
  - (along with the landlord), ensure that all flooring is maintained to a good standard;
  - where requested, provide parents with information about the school's complaints procedure and include with this details of any formal complaints received during the preceding school year;
  - provide for local authorities an annual account of the income received and expenditure incurred in respect of each pupil funded by those authorities.

## COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

### 1. The quality of education provided by the school

#### The quality of the curriculum

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The curriculum is broad and balanced and well suited to meet pupils' individual aptitudes and

aspirations. The school achieves its aim of re-engaging pupils in their education by providing them with positive experiences which improve their self-esteem and confidence. The curriculum is taught largely through individual and small group study programmes which are effective in helping pupils make progress with their behaviour and learning.

There is a focus on the National Curriculum core subjects of numeracy and literacy, with science, information and communication technology (ICT), personal, social and health education (PSHE), art and music also being provided. Currently there are limited facilities to support the teaching of science and, although food technology is taught, there are no facilities for teaching other aspects of design and technology. Senior management has already identified these shortfalls and is working to remedy them. History and geography are taught where pupils have an individual interest and there are good examples of pupils researching history projects. The school takes pupils to a local sports centre for physical education and they also benefit from visiting an outdoor pursuits centre each week.

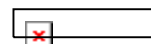
Most subjects have written policies which reflect the school's overall aims. The core subjects are supported by sound schemes of work and they are being developed in other areas. Currently there is a limited range of resources to support literacy and there is insufficient use of ICT across the curriculum. The school is aware of these deficiencies and has appropriate plans to remedy them.

PSHE features prominently on the timetable and is supported by a good range of videos and other material which address issues such as keeping safe, tolerance and becoming a responsible citizen. Pupils develop their independent living skills well through the food technology course and there are appropriate links with the Connexions Service, which provides advice to pupils on their future careers. In conjunction with the personal tutor system the benefit to pupils is very good.

There is a good range of accredited courses and each year pupils successfully pass examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). These include mathematics and English. In addition pupils enter for accreditation in Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT) and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) 'Skills for Living'. The school also arranges for older pupils to study vocational courses at local colleges and has pupils studying catering, construction and outdoor leisure. One pupil is completing a successful work experience placement.

Discussion with pupils indicates that they value these courses, which are tailored to individual needs and prepare them well for leaving school. For example, a pupil who has a part-time placement at a local agricultural college is looking forward to a full time placement at this college in the forthcoming academic year.

## **The quality of teaching and assessment**



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Teaching is provided by both qualified and unqualified staff largely on a one-to-one basis. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. The quality of teaching in one-third of lessons seen was very good or excellent. There was no substantial difference in the general quality of teaching provided by either qualified or unqualified staff. Better quality teaching was provided by those staff with specialist qualifications and expertise in their subject and whose knowledge challenged the learning of pupils. In those lessons where teaching was judged as satisfactory a common weakness was the lack of assessment. Too often lessons finished without any clear idea on the part of the teacher that what they had taught had been learned by the pupil. Lessons would benefit from plans which have clearer statements of what pupils are to learn and also from sharing these aims with the pupils at the start of each lesson. In many examples lesson plans simply express the content of

what pupils will experience.

As a result of effective teaching, pupils make satisfactory progress in both literacy and numeracy. Due to the complexities of their emotional difficulties and the long periods of missed and disrupted schooling most pupils achieve below national expectations. Despite this many pupils expressed gratitude to what the school was doing for them and felt they would not otherwise have been able to progress as far. The one-to-one teaching benefits all pupils because none are constrained by the needs of others.

A significant strength of all teaching is the way in which pupils are drawn to learning and the responses they show. This is the result of very good relationships between staff and pupils. There was a noticeable difference between those pupils who were new to the school and those who had been there for some time. The latter were much more enthusiastic about learning and took conspicuous pride in their achievements. Those pupils relatively new to the school, though more reticent about learning, were confident to try new things even though this would mean showing what they might regard as 'weakness'.

Where teachers are confident in their subject knowledge, such as in English, science, art and music, expertise linked to enthusiasm engages the attention of pupils and results in long periods of concentration in which pupils achieve well. For example, in art lessons some pupils with poor skills are taught useful techniques in presenting their work as well as giving expression to it. Higher attaining pupils further refine their work because they are set correspondingly more difficult challenges.

The weaknesses in teaching relate mainly to the marking and assessment of pupils' work. Further development is needed in order to ascertain clearer pictures of pupils' progress over extended periods of time. Assessment is not embedded within teachers' planning or lessons themselves and most teachers have only a notional view about how well their pupils are achieving. Although there is an effective testing programme for pupils when they arrive at the school this is not consistently applied throughout their time at the school. Consequently, the annual review reports are composed mainly of anecdotal and subjective opinion. It is difficult, therefore, for the headteacher to have a secure view about the progress made by individual pupils. The headteacher has introduced procedures by which the continuing achievements of pupils might be measured, but these have yet to be adopted by all teachers.

In some lessons opportunities were missed for pupils to extend their learning through the use of ICT. Although computers are readily available their use was infrequent and several lessons would have benefited from the inclusion of ICT. Similarly opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy across the curriculum also remained unrecognised.

Pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) contain targets which are too general and the review periods between these are so long as to render the targets ineffective. Discussion with both pupils and teachers indicated that neither was always aware of what the targets were. These targets should refer to short-term individual needs which relate more closely to the subjects they study.

Although resources are satisfactory in both quality and quantity, they could be used more imaginatively and consistently. Some of the weaker lessons were composed of question and answer dialogues. These could have been enlivened by the use of a greater range of resources. In turn this would have provided a wider range of learning opportunities.

### ***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

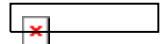
*No.*

## ***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- *introduce a framework for assessing pupils' achievements and ensure information from this is taken into account in the planning of all lessons (paragraph 1.(3)(g)).*

## **2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**



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The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is successful in achieving its aim to provide an environment in which pupils are given the opportunity and time to mature into rounded individuals.

There is an appropriate emphasis on the development of pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. Pupils demonstrate this, for example, through performing in assemblies; two pupils sang an impressive duet during one such assembly. This polished performance was the result of several hours of rehearsal. All pupils attend an outdoor pursuits centre each week, where they learn to overcome challenges and work as teams.

Pupils are elected to a school council where they experience democratic decision making during termly meetings. These meetings are designed so that all views can be represented. The school also provides individual counselling for many pupils to help them develop greater self-knowledge and understanding of their behaviour.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. In most cases their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are polite and courteous to visitors and discuss their work with obvious pride. There are good relationships between pupils and they listen well to each other during assembly and in group lessons. Staff also have good relationships with pupils and are sensitive to their individual needs. The flexible and patient approach of staff avoids unnecessary confrontations and helps pupils to take responsibility for their own actions. This creates a calm atmosphere where pupils feel secure and develop increasing confidence to learn and control their behaviour.

Staff routinely discuss with pupils the consequences of their behaviour and help them distinguish right from wrong. Positive behaviour is reinforced through a reward system, which is linked to recognition in assembly and the amount of pocket money a pupil receives. This system generally works well. However, opportunities are missed to discuss the progress pupils make in relation to their individual behaviour targets at the end of each lesson. The school has plans to strengthen the use of targets and further develop opportunities for pupils to take responsibility through peer-mentoring.

An appropriate selection of literature is studied in English which supports the discussion of social and moral issues, for example, works by Dickens, Steinbeck and Anne Frank. In these lessons older pupils compare how such issues are presented differently in film and literature. They discuss their views with increasing confidence and learn to listen to and respect the views of others. This is indicative of their growing maturity.

The school provides a suitable range of visits outside the school where pupils demonstrate their social skills and come to understand the conventions of behaviour in the wider community. Venues include a sports centre, YMCA and leisure park. The PSHE programme informs pupils about how they can keep safe and become responsible members of society. Also, pupils study the ASDAN 'Skills for Living' course, which provides a module on understanding the services and institutions in

the wider community.

There is reference in some subject planning for pupils to develop knowledge of their own and other cultures, for example in art, English and religious education. However, planned opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of both their own and others' culture are too few. There is insufficient evidence, as seen in books, displays and pupils' work, to show that the school is providing pupils with adequate knowledge and experience of the diversity of the world in which they will live.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

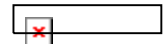
No.

***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- *review schemes of work to ensure that pupils are provided with sufficient reference to their own and other cultural traditions (paragraph 2(e)).*

**3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils**



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The school promotes effectively the health, safety and welfare of pupils. There are appropriate policies and procedures relating to child protection, prevention of bullying, pupils' behaviour and rewards and sanctions. New staff receive relevant training and are aware of the procedures.

The school has arranged inspections by professional agencies to ensure that the building is safe and recommendations from these have been implemented, for example displaying notices to show the location of fire exits. The school has a First Aid policy and two members of staff are qualified in First Aid.

There are good levels of supervision throughout the day. Each pupil is assigned a personal tutor and pupils display sufficient trust in staff to discuss issues that may be of concern to them.

Pupils are set individual targets to improve their behaviour. Progress towards these is encouraged through a positive system of points and rewards. Incidents and accidents are properly recorded and any action noted. There are clear guidelines and procedures for managing pupils' behaviour. Sanctions are reasonable and they are applied with due consideration for the individual.

Admission and attendance registers are completed in the required form.

The school is aware of its responsibility to provide access for pupils with disabilities and the school policies reflect the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. Considerable efforts have been made to accommodate a pupil with hearing impairment. There is a staff member with a qualification in British Sign Language and she is teaching this skill to other staff as well as to pupils. This approach has helped the hearing impaired pupil to be included in the life of the school. Due to the

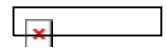
school's pending relocation, longer term plans to improve wider access to the premises for pupils with disabilities have been deferred.

Girls are a minority in the school, but participate fully and have their needs considered equally alongside the boys.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff**



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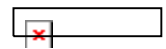
There is a thorough system for carrying out checks on applicants for posts at the school. The interview process includes enquiries about previous employment or training. All staff are also subject to enhanced checks through the screening process of the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). Identities are checked.

The headteacher provides good leadership and within the short period since her appointment has united a multi-disciplinary group into an effective team. There is a common determination by staff to provide the best they can for their pupils.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation**



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Overall, the quality of the accommodation is satisfactory, providing as it does rooms of various sizes which enable staff to provide either small group or one-to-one tuition for pupils. Rooms are appropriately furnished. Generally the facilities within these rooms enable a variety of teaching and learning methods to take place. In the case of science and art, however, the facilities restrict what pupils might achieve. In the art room, for example, there is no source of water and the floor is carpeted. There is also no dedicated facility for pupils should they fall ill during the course of the day. In this eventuality the school makes a quiet room available and the contingency plan is for the pupil to be immediately returned to his or her residence.

The flooring on the first floor corridor is in poor condition. The school management has brought this to the attention of the landlord and was able to produce evidence of an undertaking that remedial works would begin during the week following the inspection. The company recognises that the school has now outgrown the present building and fully anticipates a move to larger premises within



the next twelve months.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

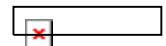
No.

***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- *ensure that flooring on the first floor is repaired to a standard that does not compromise the health and safety of pupils and staff (paragraph 5(s)).*

**6. The quality of information for parents and other partners**



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The school prospectus, which is provided to parents and prospective parents, gives a substantial range of information. This includes the philosophy and aims of the school, admission procedures, the range of services which the school offers, details of the special educational needs policy and other administrative matters. However, the prospectus does not include information relating to the school's discipline and exclusions policy nor the name and residential address of the proprietor. Although reference is made to a complaints policy it does not give a clear overview of the system.

Information relating to pupils' personal and academic progress is provided annually to parents. Parents are included fully in the review process, whether or not their child has a statement of special educational need. Referring authorities are also provided with the complete range of information relating to pupils they place at the school, except that the school does not supply the required financial information to those local authorities which fund places at the school.

One in four parents returned their pre-inspection questionnaire. Of those that chose to take part in this exercise two-thirds felt that the school kept them well informed about how their child was doing and a similar proportion felt they would be able to approach the school on any issue which might concern them.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

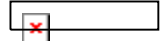
No.

***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- *include in the prospectus the name and residential address of the proprietor (paragraph 6.(2)(b));*
- *make reference in the prospectus to its policies relating to discipline and exclusions (paragraph 6.(2)(e)); and*
- *provide financial information concerning income and expenditure to those local authorities which wholly or partly fund places for pupils registered at the school (paragraph 6.(7)).*

## **7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints**



The school has written complaints procedures for pupils and members of the public. These arrangements are generally sound, allowing for complaints to be initially considered on an informal basis. However, should a complaint not be resolved, there is no provision for reference to a panel. Also, the school does not yet have a complaints procedure for parents.

### ***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

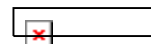
No.

### ***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- *produce a complaints procedure which clearly sets out the following stipulation:*
- *a clear time scale for the management of the complaint (paragraph 7(c));*
- *a procedure for parents to complain in writing should they not be satisfied with the response to an informal complaint (paragraph 7(e));*
- *that if parents are dissatisfied with the outcome to their complaint, a panel of at least three people, uninvolved in the original complaint (paragraph 7 (f));*
- *that one member of the panel should be independent of the management and running of the school (paragraph 7(g));*
- *a procedure which allows for parents to attend a panel hearing and arrangements for them to be accompanied if they wish (paragraph 7(h));*
- *the provision for a copy of the findings and recommendations of the panel to be given to the complainant, proprietor, head teacher and where relevant the person complained about (paragraph 7 (i));*
- *a system which maintains written records of all complaints, with an indication of whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or that they proceeded to a panel hearing (paragraph 7 (j)); and*
- *provision for correspondence, statements and records of complaints to be kept confidential, (except where the school is required to disclose information about the number of formal complaints made during the preceding year to parents, inspectors of the school, the Secretary of State and other interested parties, should they ask for access to such records) (paragraph 7 (k)).*

## SCHOOL DETAILS



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Name of school:	New Horizon Centre		
DfES Number:	933 / 6203		
Type of school:	Special		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	11-16 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 9	Girls: 3	Total: 12
Number on roll (part-time pupils):			
Number of boarders:			
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys: 5	Girls: 1	Total: 6
Annual fees (day pupils):	£15,340 - £27,300		
Address of school:	60 Fore Street North Petherton Bridgwater Somerset TA6 6QA		
Telephone number:	01278 662 357		
Fax number:	01278 661 012		
Email address:	school@newhorizoncentre.co.uk		
Headteacher:	Mrs Jennie Meadows		
Proprietor:	Mr Graham Winter (New Horizon Centre Ltd)		
Reporting Inspector:	Mr Tom Smith		
Date of inspection:	26 - 28 January 2004		

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