



Office for Standards
in Education

Appletree School

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Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

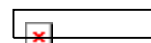
What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

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

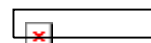
Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

School details

Introduction and summary

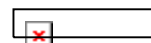


Purpose and scope of the inspection



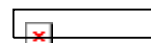
This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school



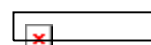
Appletree School is a residential special school for up to fourteen pupils with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties who are between the ages of six to twelve years of age. The school is registered and approved by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). Most of the twelve pupils currently attending have been placed at the school by local authorities and come from all parts of England. Most are the subject of care orders and board at the school all year round. The average length of attendance is two years. Most pupils have learning difficulties, and all but one have a statement of special educational need; they receive therapeutic support to help them manage their behaviour and emotions. Only one girl currently attends the school, and all except two of the pupils are from white British backgrounds.

Summary of main findings



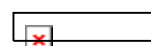
Appletree School is an effective school which meets successfully the academic, personal and social needs of its pupils. There is consistent management of pupils' behaviour, for which there are high expectations. Because of this pupils develop very positive attitudes to learning and settle into the routines of the school quickly. The school provides a curriculum which is appropriate and relevant to the ages of the pupils, based on the National Curriculum. This enables pupils to make good progress and allows a small number to re-integrate into mainstream education. Overall, the teaching is good, and there are examples of very good teaching. The senior managers have a good insight into the school's strengths and weaknesses, and, through self-evaluation, have a clear understanding of the areas which need development.

What the school does well



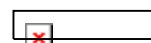
- It provides a broad and balanced curriculum which is well planned and effectively delivered;
- it places a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy, and on personal and social development to cultivate independence;
- the curriculum makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development;
- the quality of teaching and learning is good;
- the teamwork between all the adults involved in teaching and supporting pupils is very good, and as a result pupils gain confidence and improve their self-esteem; and
- the assessment of pupils' academic achievement and social and personal development is comprehensive, and the information is used well to set targets for pupils.

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



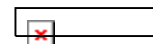
- Include in its prospectus additional information for parents or carers, as detailed in section 6 of this report; and
- prepare and submit to the local authority, and, on request, to the Secretary of State, an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school for each pupil.

What the school must do in order to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA):



- give due regard to its duties under the DDA by undertaking the disability access audit.

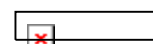
Next steps



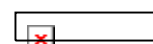
Although not required by the regulations to do so, the school may also like to consider the following areas so as to continue improving and developing the educational provision:

- further develop the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning;
- further develop the tracking of pupils' progress by linking the pupils' curriculum targets to National Curriculum levels of attainment; and
- introduce a programme for improving pupils' handwriting skills.

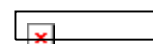
Compliance with the regulations for registration



1. The quality of education provided by the school



The quality of the curriculum



The curriculum is appropriate for the ages and levels of attainment of the pupils in the school, including those with special educational needs. It is generally a broad and balanced curriculum, and is well planned and effectively delivered. It reflects the National Curriculum programmes of study, is taught full-time, and enables pupils to re-integrate into mainstream education when their placement at Appletree School is no longer appropriate. The school provides opportunities for all pupils to experience activities that promote more acceptable behaviour and a respect for the needs of others, and that enhances their self-esteem. This is central to the work of the school and the curriculum is planned so that knowledge, skills and understanding make a positive and therapeutic contribution to the pupils' learning experiences. Pupils' behaviour and personal development are seen as an integral part of the teaching and learning process.

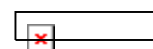
Most pupils have learning difficulties and come into the school with levels of attainment below those expected for pupils of a similar age. Appropriate emphasis is given to the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills, as well as investigation work in science. However, there is less emphasis on developing mature and well-formed handwriting. The curriculum includes the teaching of ICT but not enough emphasis is placed on its use in supporting learning. Pupils' work does not show the regular use of ICT for research on the Internet, the collection of data and display of information in chart form, or word processing. This puts pupils at a disadvantage when they are re-integrated into mainstream schools.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is part of the timetable, and contains appropriate topics relating to citizenship. Use is sometimes made of visiting speakers and visits to places outside school. The school also promotes the development of problem solving and thinking skills, as well as developing independent and group learning techniques, especially through the inclusion of a session in a leased piece of the forest where pupils are presented with tasks and activities to

promote these skills. This also provides very good links with other subjects, such as for design and technology (designing and making shelters), physical education (outdoor activities and fitness), and geography (route finding). Extra-curricular activities are organised by the residential care staff and are supported by education staff on a rotational basis. These support the curriculum as well as pupils' personal development.

There is an overarching curriculum policy, which reflects the work of the school and its ethos. It is implemented well. All subjects have policies and are supported by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) schemes of work. Long-, medium-, and short-term planning are in place, and while the medium-term planning is consistent, the quality of the individual lesson planning varies as it is linked to the experience of teachers. The best lesson planning details the activities for pupils of different attainment levels, and the expected learning outcomes.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



The quality of teaching is good or better in almost all lessons observed during the inspection and in many lessons it was very good. It is weaker where teachers are inexperienced in identifying specific activities and outcomes for pupils at different levels of attainment. Good teaching ensures that pupils achieve well and make good progress across the curriculum. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They have high expectations for pupils' approaches to learning, including the completion and neatness of their work. As a result, pupils settle well and during the inspection week showed they were eager to complete work, took a pride in their achievements and wanted to show and share their work with others. This was especially evident in a Year 6 science lesson where pupils worked excellently in groups, sharing and taking care of the resources, and rising to the challenge of making an electrical circuit with three bulbs and then inserting a switch. The teacher extended the learning of the two higher-attaining pupils by questioning why the bulbs were not as bright.

The teamwork between all the adults who work in the classroom is very good. Learning support assistants have a good relationship with pupils and know them so well that they are able to move between pupils and be alert to their changing moods. Staff have a consistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour, promoting socially acceptable behaviour and language, good relationships and personal responsibility. Because of clear expectations, consistent management, and the appropriate activities the pupils' behaviour on the week of the inspection was very good.

Assessment is good and the procedures enable the staff to set accurate targets and monitor progress, especially in English and mathematics and in personal development. The school carries out detailed assessment of each pupil's attainment, personal and social development, and behaviour during their first few weeks in school. This is compared with information on pupils prior to placement, and provides the school with a baseline with which to measure progress and to set targets.

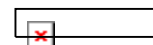
Academic and behavioural targets are set and evaluated weekly for all pupils in every subject. Records are extremely well organised and provide staff with a complete overview of pupils' achievements. They are included in each pupil's weekly IEP. They are then collated at half-termly reviews to measure progress, both in achievement and attitude. However, although the pupils' records of achievement contain a good range of examples of the work that they have completed in each subject, they are not assessed against National Curriculum levels. The introduction of this practice would aid the more accurate tracking of pupils' progress and attainment in each subject.

Pupils who are still at the school at the end of Year 6 are entered for the end of Key Stage 2 national tests. However, by this time many are successfully placed with foster carers and re-integrate into mainstream schools.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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



The school makes good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. However, more emphasis could be placed on developing pupils' cultural awareness. The ethos within both the school and the care setting is one of showing concern and respect for the individual. The provision is enhanced by a well-structured PSHE programme in which pupils are given opportunities to explore issues, such as relationships, physical growth and development, as well as how to care for themselves and the environment. Religious education and assemblies are used well to teach pupils about the faiths, cultures and customs of other nations. For example, in a whole school assembly pupils were taught about the symbolic significance of light in different religions and cultures.

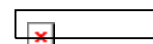
The provision for pupils' moral development is supported well by the school's system of sanctions and rewards. This helps pupils to distinguish between right and wrong. All pupils have been involved in drawing up their classroom rules and in evaluating progress toward their individual behaviour targets. In lessons, pupils are encouraged to make decisions, take turns and listen to the responses of others and their points of view. A spirit of mutual respect exists between pupils and staff. Despite their difficulties, pupils' attitudes toward staff and visitors are good. The consistent approach to behaviour management from all adults has a positive impact on pupils' behaviour in and around school.

Provision for pupils' social development is promoted effectively both in school and in the care setting. Pupils attend a range of clubs and social events in the local village and the specific needs of the one girl pupil are considered and met appropriately. For example, she attends the local Brownies group and her friends are invited to activities within the school. A range of opportunities is provided for pupils to work co-operatively in groups. For example, a number of sporting and recreational activities are offered weekly where pupils can participate in team events. Pupils are encouraged to take part in community initiatives including shopping trips and visits to historical sites, museums and places of worship. Those who reside for fifty two weeks a year have a one week summer holiday away from the school. Lessons in citizenship provide pupils with a developing awareness and knowledge of public institutions and services. For example, during the inspection, all of the pupils went on a visit to the nuclear power station at Sellafield as part of the science and citizenship curriculum.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



Arrangements to safeguard pupils' health, welfare and safety are a high priority within the school. The school has a range of policies which support the well-being of pupils and staff. The procedures in the behaviour policy are wholly in keeping with the ethos of the school. These provide pupils and staff alike with clear guidelines for the management of behaviour. The rare occurrences of bullying or harassment are dealt with effectively and efficiently. Child protection arrangements are good at

all levels. Pupils are able to approach staff with confidence.

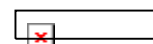
Risk assessments are a well-established part of school practices. These are about to be further improved following a comprehensive audit by an independent firm of consultants. The school has responded well to issues thus identified. Fire procedures are followed diligently with regular fire drills being carried out and recorded. Appropriate procedures are in place for the safety of pupils on out-of-school activities and trips. Admission and attendance registers are efficiently maintained and are up-to-date.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

The school, however, in order to ensure it meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), should conduct an audit of the accessibility of the curriculum and the buildings. This should be followed by an action plan.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff



All staff are well qualified and experienced for their roles and responsibilities. The board of advisors of Appletree Treatment Centre Limited employs a principal, a headteacher and a head of care to lead and develop the educational provision and the care and welfare of the pupils. The responsibilities of the principal extend to another school run by the company. The day-to-day organisation and management of Appletree is the responsibility of the headteacher and the head of care, including at weekends and in holiday periods.

The board of advisors has responded well to previous comments from HMI concerning the lack of non-contact time for the headteacher to monitor and evaluate the quality of the provision. The amount of teaching time for the headteacher has been reduced and is now shared with a part-time teacher. This has had a good impact on the ability of the school to act on the outcome of its self-evaluations and the monitoring of pupils' progress.

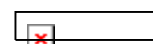
All teachers have degrees and teacher qualifications. The majority have a range of experience in other schools as well as in teaching pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Each class also has a learning support assistant, each of whom is appropriately qualified, for example with the Diploma in Sports Therapy. The school also makes good use of other professionals, who provide support for the educational, therapeutic or medical needs of the pupils.

All staff receive a good level of training which prepares them well for handling difficult and potentially harmful situations in a consistent way. There are established procedures for ensuring that all staff are checked with the appropriate authority for their suitability to work with young people. The company ensures that all staff have an enhanced check by the Criminal Records Bureau.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The school is located in a modern, purpose-built and self-contained building that is separate from the residential and administrative accommodation, which is in a 19C house.

There are three classrooms, which are appropriate in size for the four pupils currently in each class, but would not accommodate more than five pupils. They are mainly well organised with individual desks, storage facilities, a computer, and a small library area. The displays in the classrooms reflect effectively the areas of the curriculum being studied.

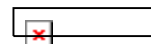
Good use is made of the fourth, larger, room for whole school assemblies and circle time, and also for art and design and some individual ICT work. Within this room there is also another small library area.

Due to the small size of the building it is not possible for the school to provide indoor activities in physical education within the school. It therefore makes use of the local leisure facilities, such as for swimming. The area surrounding the school provides ample space for outdoor games, and this is in addition to the access the school has to part of the National Forest for teaching outdoor activity skills. This supports pupils' personal development as well as enabling them to achieve well.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The information provided for, and presented to parents, carers and other professionals involved with the pupils is detailed and comprehensive. It covers all aspects of the individual pupil's development and the progress made towards achieving the targets set for them. Reports to parents and carers are of good quality, reflecting what pupils know, understand and can do, and how they have improved.

The school prospectus, while giving a general overview of the provision of both this school and the other school in the group, does not meet the requirements of the regulations. It omits to name the headteacher, the proprietor and the chair of the board of advisors; it also omits the addresses of the last two. Although it provides information concerning how it meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs, it does not include information concerning how it provides for pupils with English as an additional language.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

No.

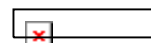
What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

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

- *the name of the headteacher (paragraph 6(2)(a));*
- *the full name, usual residential address and telephone number of the school proprietor (paragraph 6(2)(b));*
- *the name and address of the chair of the advisory body (paragraph 6(2)(c)); and*
- *particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language (paragraph 6(2)(f)).*

- addition, where a pupil, who is registered at the school, is wholly or partly funded by the local authority, the school should:
 - provide an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil to the local authority and on request to the Secretary of State (paragraph 6(7)).

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

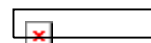


There is a clear policy for handling complaints, which is shared with parents, carers and placing authorities. It is one of a number of documents supplied along with the school prospectus. The policy was amended in January 2004 and now fully meets the regulations. The procedures for handling any complaints have also been recently reviewed and now comply fully with current requirements.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



Name of school:	Appletree School		
DfES ref number:	909/6048		
Type of school:	Residential special primary school		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	6 to 12 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 11,	Girls 1,	Total 12
Number of boarders:	Boys 11,	Girls 1,	Total 12
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 10,	Girls 1,	Total 11
Annual fees (boarders):	£63,000 to £102,000		
Address of school:	Appletree School		
	Natland		
	Kendal Cumbria		
	LA9 7QS		
E-mail address:	clair@appletreeschool.co.uk		
Telephone number:	01539 560253		
Fax number:	01539 561301		
Headteacher:	Dr Ian Barker		
Proprietor:	Appletree Treatment Centre Ltd		
Lead Inspector:	Mrs Frances Gander		
Dates of inspection:	4 - 7 May 2004		

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