

Owlswick School

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Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

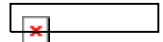
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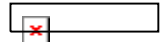
Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

School details

Introduction and summary

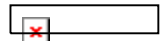


Purpose and scope of the inspection



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



Owlswick School was established in 1981. It is a small residential school for pupils aged 10 - 18 years who have emotional and behavioural difficulties, often combined with moderate learning difficulties. Most pupils are placed at the school by local authorities in the south of England, and all are in public care. All pupils have a statement of special educational need, and although the school admits both boys and girls, all the eight pupils currently on roll are boys.

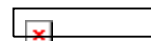
Pupils are taught in two classes that are broadly, but not exclusively, determined by age; one class is predominantly for pupils in Years 7 - 9 and the other for pupils in Years 10 and 11. They are referred to as the junior and senior class respectively. One pupil above the age of 16 years attends a local college full-time, with support from Owlswick staff.

All pupils have had disrupted schooling, with many having been out of school for considerable lengths of time. The school aims to re-introduce pupils to education and to encourage them to take responsibility for their actions through enabling them to feel secure and by developing their

confidence and self-esteem. It seeks to achieve these aims by celebrating pupils' achievements and efforts and by developing their understanding of how their behaviour can have profound effects on others.

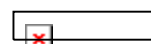
Inspectors from the Commission for Social Care Inspections (CSCI) visited the residential provision following an announced visit in September 2004 and an unannounced visit in February 2005. Overall findings were extremely positive.

Summary of main findings



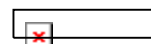
Owlswick School is a very effective school. It meets its aims of providing supportive and caring school and home environments extremely well. The proprietors are fully involved in the running of the school on a day-to-day basis and they provide very good role models. Their care and concern for pupils is evident throughout the school. The extremely positive school ethos and the very high quality relationships between staff and pupils promote pupils' personal development very effectively. Pupils follow a very broad and balanced curriculum and are taught well. Their behaviour in lessons and attitudes to their work are exceptional. Consequently, they achieve highly in acquiring new skills and they make good progress.

What the school does well



- a very well constructed curriculum gives pupils a varied and interesting range of learning experiences;
- pupils respond eagerly in lessons;
- the provision for promoting all aspects of pupils' personal development is very good;
- close links with the local community provide many enrichment opportunities during and after the school day, and strong links with local schools and colleges are used very well to extend the curriculum;
- day and residential staff liaise very closely to ensure that all adults are aware of any difficult situations as they develop. As a result, pupils are managed consistently; and
- the whole staff team is committed to developing pupils' self-esteem, confidence and their trust in adults; exceptionally high quality social interactions are evident throughout the school.

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



- maintain an admission register and an attendance register in accordance with regulations; and
- send to the local authority, and on request to the Secretary of State, an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of each pupil registered at the school who is wholly or partly funded by that local authority.

What the school must do to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002

In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA, the school should:

- devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.

Next steps

Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- monitor lessons to ensure that all teachers consistently use time efficiently and that teaching methods extend pupils' learning.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

All pupils receive full-time education in excess of 23 hours taught time each week. They follow a very good curriculum that is designed to broadly mirror the National Curriculum, adapted to meet their needs. As a result, the school meets the requirements in all the pupils' statements of special educational need. Effective management procedures ensure that each pupil's curriculum is broad, with appropriate periods of time allocated to each subject area. As a result, at the end of Year 11 pupils are successful in the accredited courses they follow, which include General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and Certificate of Educational Achievement (Entry Level) examinations.

A comprehensive curriculum statement is supported by policies, schemes of work and effective medium-term plans for all subjects. Consequently, the curriculum is very well planned, and structured in a way that matches pupils' ages and interests. There is a clear focus on developing the key skills of literacy and numeracy. English lessons provide a good balance between speaking and listening, reading and writing, and literacy skills are also promoted through other activities. For instance, assemblies and whole school meetings at the end of each day require pupils to listen

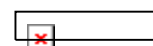
carefully and to speak appropriately. Pupils acquire and rehearse numeracy skills not only in mathematics lessons, but also through activities in subjects such as design and technology (DT), science and geography. Information and communication technology (ICT) skills are taught through all subjects of the curriculum rather than in discrete lessons. This approach is successful; pupils are competent computer users.

Pupils benefit greatly from the richness that is built into the curriculum. Subjects including history, French, art and design, physical education, religious education (RE) and a very impressive music and drama project give pupils valuable exposure to creative, aesthetic, physical and cultural learning experiences. In addition, there is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' personal development through personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship education. The strong PSHE curriculum considers the physical changes associated with growing up, including sex and relationships education, and health-related issues such as diet, alcohol, smoking and drugs. The citizenship programme prepares pupils extremely well for leaving school and the complexities of adult life. Pupils learn about crime, human rights, local democracy and government elections.

Work-related learning is well planned. Links with the local Connexions service and careers education within school enable pupils to embark on work experience placements and to follow courses at local colleges, for which some receive accreditation such as a National Vocational Qualification in horticulture. Other individuals' needs are addressed through links with other colleges and schools, such as trial inclusion placements or, in the case of pupils over the age of 16 years, full-time placement at a college, supported by Owlswick staff.

A wide range of enrichment activities extends pupils' learning extremely successfully. Many educational visits bring learning alive and all pupils go on residential adventure holidays, during which they experience many outdoor pursuits.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



Much teaching is very good, and none is unsatisfactory. As a result, pupils achieve highly and make good progress. The most striking features of lessons are pupils' attitudes and behaviour. They arrive promptly and prepared; they are enthusiastic, very keen to learn and want to improve. This is because teachers provide them with activities that are interesting, challenging and appropriate to their ages.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour, but provide great encouragement and sensitive support when required. Therefore, lessons are orderly and productive sessions. Teachers generally have good knowledge of the subjects they teach, and they know their pupils very well. In part, this is because of the effectiveness of communication between staff members. Teachers are aware of any adverse circumstances arising from pupils' family homes, from the residential provision or from previous lessons, which might have an effect on their learning. Effective assessment procedures enable teachers to plan lessons that build well on pupils' prior learning.

A small number of minor shortcomings in the quality of teaching involve either unnecessary repetition of activities, or ineffective teaching methods.

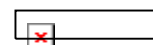
Teachers promote pupils' personal development in a variety of ways. In some tasks, as in English when reading texts intended for different audiences, pupils are encouraged to examine the text rigorously and to reflect and think about what the writer is saying. Some activities require pupils to work collaboratively, such as the music and drama project, while on other occasions teachers expect pupils to work independently. The daily homework tasks link very well to what has been taught in the classroom. Although pupils are expected to work independently, residential care staff are always available to advise, support and guide.

The school maintains good records of pupils' achievements. A few pupils have been in the school long enough to show that they make good progress between the nationally standardised tests they took at the end of Year 6 and those they sat at the end of Year 9. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are assessed regularly, using standardised tests, and their behaviour/personal development profile is also examined regularly. This profile is particularly effective as pupils also contribute, carrying out a self-evaluation of their personal skills. Assessment information is used well. Twice yearly, an achievement profile is completed for every subject, including personal targets, and this information is used in developing new individual education plan (IEP) targets.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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



The provision for pupils' personal development is very good. The school places a great emphasis on helping pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. In addition, it helps them to understand the implications of their actions and the impact they may have on others. The whole school ethos is geared towards nurturing pupils' personal development. This occurs through planned ways, such as school assemblies and in lessons like PSHE and RE, and informally through the interactions and relationships between all members of the school community.

During lessons and in assemblies, pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own and others' feelings. They learn about major world faiths in RE lessons, and through their extensive charity work they develop an understanding of the difficulties faced by others. This may be appreciating the suffering of those in famines, or the extreme difficulties faced by the survivors of the recent tsunami. The curriculum and many out-of-school activities combine to develop in pupils an interest and concern for those less fortunate than themselves.

The school is a most orderly and happy place in which pupils live and learn. Consistently high expectations are reinforced in a subtle manner and underpinned by excellent relationships between all members of the community. Staff act as very good role models. Pupils have a very good understanding of the difference between right and wrong and know what is expected of them; the merit system is used well to reinforce and reward good behaviour and effort. Points are announced at the meeting held at the end of each day between all pupils, residential care staff and the proprietors. Pupils fully accept any low scores because they understand the features of their behaviour that were unacceptable.

The development of pupils' social skills is excellent. Pupils are polite, chatty and well behaved in school and in the home setting. They work hard, take pride in their achievements and sustain concentration well. Pupils' social skills are promoted throughout the school day and in the home setting. They are encouraged to take responsibility, and they do so willingly. In the pre-inspection questionnaire that pupils completed, they were unanimous in their view that they were encouraged to do things for themselves. There is a well-structured approach towards helping them to acquire the necessary skills to live independently when they leave. The range of residential visits and educational trips make an important contribution to pupils' social development. Evening activities, such as football, scouts and sea cadets that take place within the local community enhance these skills further.

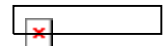
The curriculum enables pupils to develop an awareness and understanding of the beliefs and cultures of others. These insights are promoted very well through subjects such as English, music, history and geography and the school's fund-raising activities. The well-planned citizenship education programme extends pupils' knowledge of public services in the local area and nationally. The pre-inspection questionnaire showed that all pupils believe they are helped to develop an

understanding of their own and other people's cultures.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



The school is a very safe place for pupils to work. The recent CSCI reports confirm that it is an equally safe for pupils to live. Pupils are unanimous in stating that they feel safe in school and that the school deals effectively with any bullying. They are well supervised at all times, and their health, care and welfare are at the forefront of all that the school does. The quality of the relationships that are evident throughout the school demonstrate the commitment of the staff to providing a healthy and safe environment. This aim is underpinned by an impressive range of school policies, guidelines and systems. However, although the school is small and staff know the whereabouts of all pupils, there is no daily attendance register. In addition, the admission register is too brief, failing to record all the required information.

The comprehensive behaviour management policy places an appropriate emphasis on encouraging good behaviour. Pupils also have very clear guidelines about how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. The list of possible sanctions is understood by the pupils, and they are also aware that persistently unacceptable behaviour can lead to suspension and, ultimately, termination of the placement. All serious incidents and sanctions are recorded meticulously.

Pupils fully understand the school's attitude to bullying, and they know who to talk to if they feel they have been a victim of bullying. There are effective child protection guidelines and procedures and staff receive appropriate levels of training. First Aid procedures are detailed in the school's health care policy and practice guidelines. The school also supports pupils' mental health very effectively, with many pupils having the opportunity to meet with a children's psychotherapist who visits twice a week.

Pupils are equally safe when off-site. Extremely detailed risk assessments are carried out for all the places that pupils visit.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school complies with all but one of the requirements.

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:

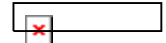
- maintain an admission register and an attendance register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 (paragraph 3(9)).

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

In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA the school should:

- devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

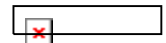


The procedures for residential care staff recruitment, induction and supervision are good. Checklists ensure that a common procedure is followed, and references and qualifications are checked. The teaching staff is very stable, with no mobility within the last four years. The school is vigilant in ensuring that all staff are subject to satisfactory clearance by the Criminal Records Bureau at an enhanced level.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



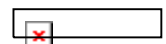
Both educational and residential accommodation are very good. The school and home are situated in a large country house set in three acres of very well maintained grounds. In addition to providing all residential and recreational facilities, the main house contains three general classrooms, a library and a resource area. A recently built detached teaching area contains a well-equipped DT workshop and an art and design studio. It also contains a room that usually functions as a fitness area but which can also be used as a large meeting room. There are ample outdoor play areas, and well-tended vegetable patches that the pupils maintain.

All buildings are in a good state of repair, a view supported by the CSCI inspectors. Pupils help with household chores and the rooms are clean and maintained to a high standard of decoration. Classrooms have good levels of ventilation, heating and lighting and are of adequate size for the number of pupils in each class. They are equipped with furniture and other facilities that are appropriate to pupils' age and size.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The school brochure provides parents, prospective parents and placing local authorities with the basic information required by the regulations. This describes the school's aims, explains its ethos and comments on other issues such as the curriculum, health, social development and leisure. In addition, parents are given details of admissions procedures and information about discipline and exclusions. The brochure also lists all the other information about the school that is available and informs the parents of pupils and prospective pupils that they can request copies of this.

Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress. The school achieves this through the reports produced for each pupil's annual review of his statement of special educational need. The reports are detailed and informative. They contain a report of pupils' achievements and progress in

each subject studied, and attainment levels achieved in English, mathematics and science. The school plays a very active role in the annual review process, and the reports produced give sponsoring local authorities detailed information. However, the school does not provide these local authorities with detail about the income received and the expenditure incurred in respect of each pupil they support.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

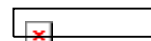
The school complies with all but one of the requirements.

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:

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

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



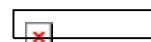
Complaints from parents are rare. The school has a complaints policy and the school brochure informs parents how they can obtain a copy. Procedures allow for complaints to be considered both informally and formally, and there are clear timescales that show the maximum periods of time allowed to elapse between one stage of the procedure and the next. There are useful guidelines for managing complaints.

The 'Worries and Complaints' policy for pupils explains in child-friendly language what they should do if they want to talk to someone or make a complaint. It considers things that they might want to complain about, and lists the process to follow. Above all, it emphasises their right to complain if they feel they have not been treated fairly. Complaints from pupils are rare, but they are recorded in detail. Pupils are unanimous in confirming that there is a responsible adult they can turn to if they have a personal problem.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



Name of school:	Owlswick School		
DfES ref number:	845/6007		
Type of school:	Residential special school		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	10 - 18 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 8,	Girls 0,	Total 8

Number of boarders:	Boys 8,	Girls 0,	Total 8
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 8,	Girls 0,	Total 8
Annual fees (boarders):	£75,000		
Address of school:	Newhaven Road Kingston Lewes BN7 3NF		
E-mail address:	akharper@btconnect.com		
Telephone number:	01273 473078		
Fax number:	01273 473721		
Headteacher:	Mr A K Harper		
Proprietor:	Mr A K Harper, Mrs J N Harper		
Lead Inspector:	Mr Mike Kell		
Dates of inspection:	27 - 30 June 2005		

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