



Wendover House School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110590
LEA Buckinghamshire LEA
Inspection number 278462
Inspection dates 23 January 2006 to 24 January 2006
Reporting inspector Margaret Goodchild AI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special	School address	Church Lane
School category	Community		Wendover
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Aylesbury HP22 6NL
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	01296 622157
Number on roll	73	Fax number	01296 622628
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr John Purcell
Date of previous inspection	25 September 2000	Headteacher	Mr Nigel Morris

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	23 January 2006 - 24 January 2006	278462

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a special school for secondary-aged boys who have a statement of special educational needs for their emotional and behavioural difficulties. Some pupils also have moderate learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, speech and language disorders or specific learning difficulties. Many pupils join the school with attainment that is below average, especially in literacy, and with increasingly complex difficulties. A significant number of pupils have a history of poor attendance, some having previously been school refusers who have been out of school for up to two years. Most boys come from backgrounds where there are social difficulties: some live in circumstances where crime, violence, drug and alcohol abuse are the norm. The vast majority of boys are day pupils and the remainder (14 out of 69) are weekly boarders. Nearly all the pupils are of White British heritage.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school judges its own effectiveness to be satisfactory but senior managers are too modest about the good improvements that have been made, especially over the last year. This is a good school that provides good value for money. Leadership and management of the school and of the boarding provision are good. Teaching is good overall with a significant amount of outstanding teaching. This is a key factor in the school's continued capacity to improve and in pupils' good overall achievement. Pupils are well cared for and learn in an environment that is generally calm and orderly. Inappropriate behaviour is managed well so that pupils are clear about what is expected of them. Most attend regularly and work hard but a minority are less responsive to what the school has to offer and would benefit from the chance to take part in more vocational courses at Key Stage 4. The leadership and management of some subjects are good; the co-ordination of a few subjects is not as effective as they should be. New systems for assessing what pupils know and can do are satisfactory, but the school has only just begun to use assessment information to check the school's effectiveness and occasionally teachers do not use it enough to match work to the next step in pupils' learning.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 2

The school provides well for those pupils in Years 7 to 10 who board for all or part of the week. Good leadership and management in this area have led to substantial improvements since the last OFSTED inspection and since the Commission for Social Care Inspection against the National Minimum Standards that took place a year ago. Staff know individual pupils well and provide a good level of care which contributes to their personal development. There is close liaison between the boarding staff, teachers and teaching assistants in identifying pupils' individual targets and in devising their care plans. Boarders have good access to educational and recreational activities and the staff are working effectively to improve the opportunities provided.

What the school should do to improve further

* Extend the range of vocational and other learning opportunities, particularly through increasing links with other establishments and organisations* Make greater use of assessment information within school self-evaluation and ensure that work is matched consistently to pupils' needs* Provide support and training so that all subject co-ordinators fulfil their responsibilities effectively.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good overall. As a result of the good teaching, many pupils at both key stages make good progress towards challenging targets in their individual education

plans with exceptionally good progress in some lessons. Pupils produce a good amount of work in English and mathematics, especially at in Years 7 to 9, where many achieve extremely well. Pupils with additional learning difficulties make good progress in developing basic skills and benefit from the very good opportunities for individual support. Standards are below the national average as a result of pupils' emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties, although there is considerable variation in the attainment of different pupils. A few higher attaining pupils are working close to national expectations whereas some pupils are working well below expectations, especially in literacy. All pupils leave with some external accreditation and examination results in Year 11 are similar to those gained in other schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. In Years 10 and 11 in particular, the irregular attendance and negative attitudes of a minority of pupils prevents them from achieving as well as they should.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Most pupils make good progress in their personal development. The majority attend regularly and improve their attitudes to learning, as revealed by the way they apply themselves to their work. Behaviour in lessons is good and pupils usually learn in an environment that is calm and orderly. The poor attendance of a minority of pupils means that the overall attendance rate is below the national average although it is similar to that found in other schools of this type. Pupils make good progress in their social, moral and cultural development, and satisfactory progress in their spiritual development. They learn about the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle and benefit from nutritious school meals, although they do not necessarily make healthy choices yet for themselves. They find out about how to stay safe and feel confident to report any incidents of bullying. Pupils clearly gain in their self-esteem and benefit enormously from the very good relationships they enjoy with the staff. Activities and the support that pupils receive in the boarding provision make a good contribution to their personal development. Pupils are involved in fund raising for charity and some have worked in a local charity shop and a residential home for the elderly. All pupils take part in work experience and some undertake extended work placements. Pupils develop a range of skills that should stand them in good stead when they leave.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good with a significant amount of outstanding teaching: over time, this should lead to an improvement in standards and to an increase in pupils' overall achievement. In the best lessons, teachers convey high expectations to pupils and exceptionally thorough planning ensures that the needs of individual pupils are met through varied and stimulating activities. Many teachers have made their classrooms really attractive and have established a very positive atmosphere. Teachers and teaching

assistants nearly always work well together in supporting pupils' learning and managing inappropriate behaviour. Where there are shortcomings in otherwise good teaching or where lessons are just satisfactory, work is not always matched sufficiently to the next steps in pupils' learning and inappropriate behaviour is not dealt with as firmly as it should be. Teachers praise pupils when it is justified and where teaching is outstanding, marking provides pupils with very clear guidance about how to improve their work. The school has recently developed a satisfactory system for assessing pupils' attainment and for tracking their progress. Further work needs to be done in analysing this information as part of the school's regular self-evaluation. Targets in pupils' individual education plans and in their care plans are appropriately specific and make a good contribution to their achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides well for the needs and interests of most pupils. The school has responded effectively to the change in its intake and provides well for those pupils who have additional learning needs. It has put in place exceptionally good support for pupils with literacy difficulties through a programme of individual sessions led by a specialist teacher and a course in the social use of language. Two special classes, Oaks and Poplars, provide valuable individual support to pupils who are not ready to integrate into the school's main classes because of the nature of their learning difficulties. Appropriate emphasis is given to personal, social and health education, including anti-bullying, sex education and drugs education, and to developing the basic skills that prepare pupils for life after school. All pupils find out about the world of work and pupils in Years 10 and 11 have some opportunities to gain vocational skills and to attend college. The school recognises, rightly, that the motivation and attendance of some older pupils could be improved further by extending vocational opportunities. There are some good links with organisations but partnerships, especially with mainstream schools, are not as well developed as they could be. A good range of educational visits, sporting and other activities enrich pupils' learning. Activities provided for boarders outside the school day make a good contribution to their achievement and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for in the school and within the boarding provision, and the school has won a national award for its work with looked after children. Staff are committed to supporting pupils and work well with a number of other agencies. Good procedures are in place for dealing with bullying and for assisting pupils in managing their feelings. The school is careful to ensure that pupils are protected and that the suitability of staff who work within the school and the residential is appropriately checked. Pupils have every opportunity to talk to an adult about any concerns and the social worker provides valuable support to pupils and their families. Inappropriate behaviour is managed well so that pupils can concentrate and learn, free from distraction. The

school and boarding staff work well together in supporting and guiding pupils. The school is working hard to improve attendance and works effectively with parents to try to tackle any difficulties. Pupils receive appropriate information about opportunities when they leave school, and an effective system of rewards and regular review of their targets ensure that they are properly guided about the right course of action.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides good leadership and clear direction to the school's work. Close collaboration between senior managers and the local education authority, together with a number of excellent appointments in recent years, means that the school has made good improvement and is well placed to develop further. As a result, the quality of care is good and pupils achieve well. Staff morale is high and there is now a positive climate in the school, with the majority of staff communicating high expectations and showing a real dedication to meeting the needs of all pupils. Parents have satisfactory opportunities to air their views but the school struggles to involve many as active participants and has difficulty in filling vacancies for parent governors. The governing body is well led by the chair and governors fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Although the school is too self-critical in its judgement of its overall effectiveness, senior managers have an accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are focusing appropriately on those actions that are most capable of improving the school and are now making satisfactory use of information about pupils' academic achievement as part of self-evaluation. The leadership and management of some subjects are good; the co-ordination of a few subjects is less well developed. Staff have good opportunities to extend their skills through training, and established staff have been highly effective in supporting those teachers who joined the school with little experience of working with pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school is now well staffed and well resourced. The accommodation and grounds are spacious and generally meet pupils' needs well. The resources at the school's disposal are used effectively to provide good value for money.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I enjoyed my visit to your school and thank you for making me feel welcome. I am writing to tell you what I thought about the school.

There were many things I liked about Wendover House. I could see that the staff care for you well and help you to improve your behaviour. You are lucky to have such good teachers who do all that they can to help you learn and who make your lessons interesting. When I looked at your books, I was pleased to see how much work many of you have done and I could see that a lot of you are doing well. Most of you are trying hard but a few of you do not go to school regularly and so you are missing out on important learning.

The headteacher and other managers run the school well and are keen to make it even better. I have told them that they could do that by providing you with more vocational courses and by making greater use of information about how well you are doing. They also need to make sure that all the subjects are led and managed as well as most of them already are.