

Inspection report

Fullerton House School

Independent special school

DfES ref no: 371/6011

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 17 - 20 January 2006

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 162A 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

Fullerton House School is a 52 week residential special school owned and run by its parent company, *The Hesley Group*, under the proprietorship of Mr Stephen Lloyd. The school provides residential education for up to 46 pupils aged 8 to 19 years with autism, severe and complex learning difficulties and who exhibit challenging behaviours. Pupils are placed in the school by local authorities who cannot accommodate them anywhere else because their needs are so profound, that no other establishment can cater for them.

There are 41 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are boys and there are ten girls. All pupils are housed in residential units and are offered an extensive range of education, care therapy and support. Over the last 18 months, the school has purchased and refurbished a number of residential properties in the local area and by March 2006, all pupils will be living off site in 2, 3, and 4 bedroomed houses and flats. Pupils in key stage 2, 3 and 4 are educated in Fullerton House.

Since September 2002, all post-16 students, resident in Fullerton House, have attended the vocational college attached to the Hesley Village. The range of courses offered is delivered in a variety of different locations, including the school's residential units, the Hesley Village itself, and a vocational training centre in Mexborough and in the wider community.

Pupils' attainment is very low compared with that expected for their age and all pupils have severe difficulties with basic skills, social interaction, flexible responses to their environment and communication.

Fullerton House's mission statement is: *to ensure that all pupils reach their full potential*. Social attachments between pupils and staff underpin all the work carried out at Fullerton House and the philosophy and approaches are based on positive intervention and changing behaviour without the use of sanctions. Approaches focus on individual need, promoting the concept of 'education for life', continually emphasising the positive and building on past achievements and successes.

Summary of main findings

Fullerton House School provides a very safe and caring environment which affords excellent opportunities for pupils and students to engage in learning and to develop self confidence. Pupils make good progress in basic skills, particularly in communication, social interaction and in responding more flexibly to their environment. Teaching is good with some outstanding features. The curriculum is

highly relevant to pupils' individual needs and covers a wide range of academic and vocational opportunities. Assessment is good with some excellent systems in place such as assessment for individuals. However, a whole school overview of trends and patterns has not yet fully emerged. Teamwork between residential staff and education staff is strong, particularly in the implementation of Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) and reviews.

What the school does well:

- it succeeds in promoting the personal development and well being of its pupils, through, for example, outstanding assemblies;
- it provides an excellent curriculum, which is precisely matched to individual needs and provides wide ranging opportunities to extend pupils' learning;
- it provides excellent policy and practice to ensure that pupils feel extremely safe and secure;
- it fosters excellent relationships between all staff and pupils so that pupils enjoy school; and
- the full commitment of the staff to the needs of all pupils reflects the ethos of the school to promote the achievement and well being of its pupils.

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

- it must produce an annual account of the income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of all individual pupils to be submitted to the various Local Authorities and on request to the Secretary of State.

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 on all sites.

Next Steps

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

- develop a whole school view of the progress made over time by pupils at particular key stages in order to further develop planning; and
- disseminate best practice in the use of support staff to promote effective teaching and learning.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is excellent with a well-thought out policy effectively supported by detailed schemes of work adapted from national guidance. All National Curriculum subjects are taught at a level matched closely to aptitude and ability. Each pupil has an individual learning plan (ILP), which takes full account of information from a pupils' statement of special educational needs. The ILP is used to differentiate individual sessions within every subject for each pupil. There is a strong emphasis on personal, social and health education (PSHE) and the development of communication skills, social interaction and more flexible thinking. These elements form the basis of targets in additional individual education plans (IEPs) which also inform subject planning. Pupils in Key Stage 4 follow the ALL Project and the Youth Award Scheme, which is highly relevant to their needs. The emphasis on speaking and listening, PSHE, including work related learning and citizenship prepares pupils well for adult life. A range of well thought out activities within the 24-hour curriculum enhances personal development and pupils' confidence in social situations.

Post-16 students make good progress in a wide range of accredited ASDAN and Open College Network (OCN) courses on offer at the vocational college in Mexborough and at the Hesley Village College. There are excellent practical facilities for students, to enable them to produce high quality products for sale through mini-enterprise initiatives. Close links with the Connexions service and excellent use of wider ranging facilities at the Hesley Village provide highly relevant work experience for students. This includes, paper making, a farm, a post office and a shop. There is also good provision for information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching and learning. The vocational college in Mexborough is ideally located in the heart of the town and provides immediate access to wide ranging opportunities for work experience and community involvement. For example, students, run a market stall and sell products they have made in college, as a mini-enterprise. They are also involved in recycling and conservation through well developed links with voluntary organisations and local businesses. The most capable students also benefit greatly from inclusion opportunities in local colleges, which considerably enhance their personal development.

The quality of teaching and assessment

Teaching is good with some outstanding features. Good teaching leads to good learning and pupils make good progress. There are some universally outstanding features which have significant and positive impact on pupils' progress. These are: the excellent relationships between all adults and pupils; the use of praise for positive re-enforcement, and the deft injection of appropriate humour to deflect and diffuse potentially problematic situations.

In the most successful lessons, these features are supplemented by teachers' deep knowledge and skills across a range of subjects. Teachers also apply their profound knowledge of pupils' individual education plans to provide differentiated activities

which stimulate and challenge pupils without inhibiting them. This leads to pupils' sustained interest and increased communication and social skills.

In a very small number of lessons, support staff are not used sufficiently to promote effective learning, nor are they sufficiently encouraged to become involved in pupils' learning beyond the role of care or behavioural support. However, in the vast majority of lessons, the class teacher's planning includes directions for the involvement of support staff. This planning is then implemented and support staff are enabled to provide not only excellent personal support but also very good educational support for the pupils.

Resources for practical subjects are generally good, and are particularly good in art, and design and technology. The burgeoning information and communications technology (ICT) resources are of high quality and are enjoyed by pupils.

There are good systems for assessing, monitoring and recording pupils' attainment and progress. Judicious use is made of a range of tests such as the autism baseline tests and, thereafter, behavioural charts are used successfully to monitor and record progress. Assessment for all pupils successfully monitors pupils' learning and their acquisition of skills. In addition, the school effectively assesses individual pupils' progress in communications, social awareness and how well they are responding to the gradual and sequential introduction of change, to combat the rigidity of thought, which is a major feature of their medical condition. The school is trialling, with some success, the "B Squared" electronic system of recording individual pupils' progress. There is not yet a form of whole school or whole group assessment which might indicate general trends.

Additional psychologists and language specialists make an effective contribution to assessment and planning for individual communication and behavioural needs. All statutory requirements for statements are met, and annual reviews, often recorded in visual format, using ICT and DVD, give opportunities for parents and pupils to contribute to the assessment process. Pupils' IEPs have clear targets on all aspects of their needs including individual targets for all subjects. These are reviewed regularly, involving a full multi-disciplinary team, and teachers make very good use of assessment for planning the next stage of learning.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

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

The school makes very good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils.

Pupils' spiritual development is promoted through excellent assemblies and good lessons which give them the opportunity to "think, and act beyond self." In a spiritually uplifting celebratory assembly, for example, pupils, who normally would not be able to comprehend the theme of the assembly, were able to think beyond self.

They were moved to acclaim, in their very different and individual ways, the successes of their peers.

The school has a clear moral code, which is upheld and applied consistently and universally by staff. This enables pupils to learn to distinguish right from wrong, and accept responsibility for their own behaviour. Given the medical condition of the pupils, the application of these codes is most often witnessed in practical and pragmatic situations, such as learning to wait one's turn in a queue or during class games and activities. The outcomes of such spiritual and moral development is most easily and palpably measured in a range of activities which clearly indicate pupils' social development, both as individuals, and as members of the wider society. Pupils are effectively encouraged to show initiative and to engage in activities which make a contribution to the local and to the wider community. During last year, for example, pupils successfully raised money for charities such as the Tsunami Appeal and Children in Need.

The school offers an outstandingly successful "stepped" programme of activities, which is both classroom and community based. In classroom based PSHE lessons, pupils learn about police, fire, medical, postal, banking and transport services. In the secure "village street" which is constructed in the grounds of Hesley Hall, pupils can access all these services, in a non-threatening environment. From the Mexborough site, which is a real town centre site, pupils access and use the full range of services, alongside members of the general public. This very successful programme not only gives pupils a detailed knowledge of public institutions and services, but also very effectively raises their self esteem and self confidence.

Pupils learn about other religions in religious education classes. They are encouraged to appreciate and enjoy the rich diversity of cultural differences through practical experiences which they enjoy. Pupils are, for example, introduced to a range of foods associated with festivals such as Diwali and pupils from different cultural backgrounds, such as Cantonese pupils, helped cook a meal in the traditional manner. The art which figures around the sites, and the music which is played, for example, in assemblies, reflects some cultural diversity.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school makes very good overall provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils, and some elements of the provision are excellent. A well thought out range of policies and procedures addresses all aspects of pupils' welfare. All incidents involving pupils' welfare are logged and recorded in detail, and the school is quick to respond with appropriate action. Detailed behaviour and anti-bullying policies outline the school's ethos and approach, which is to eschew a policy of sanctions. Given the particular complexity of pupils' needs, the school considers sanctions to be inappropriate and ineffective, and has replaced this approach with the more effective positive behaviour support policy. The importance of pupils' welfare, health and safety, both within and outside school, is given high priority.

Pupils are closely supervised and this safeguards their safety at all times. There is always at least one member of staff, qualified in first-aid, on duty. All the different sites of the school are safe places to work and learn.

When visits are undertaken, detailed risk assessments are implemented most effectively, adhering to the suggestions within the DfES guidance on the "health and safety of pupils on educational visits." The policies and practices, suitably augmented by health and safety professionals, such as the local fire officer, include those which relate to fire safety, including regular evacuation practice.

Staff, who are well deployed to ensure student safety, have a clear understanding of school policies, particularly those policies which relate to child protection, and they implement them sensibly and sensitively. An admission register and attendance registers for each class are kept and administered to comply with the regulations.

The school is conscious of its responsibilities to provide access to the school and to the curriculum for pupils who have disabilities, and much is already in place to help the school meet those responsibilities. However, the school does not yet have a three year accessibility plan and therefore does not fulfil its duties under the Disabilities Discrimination Act.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets all but one of the requirements.

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 and implement a three-year Disability Access Plan*

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school benefits from a well qualified and experienced staff, including teachers, residential care staff and support staff. Teamwork is very strong and all staff work closely with therapists and other professionals for the good of pupils. Selection and recruitment procedures are thorough and rigorous. Enhanced checks are made with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), references are taken up and employment history is investigated before anyone is offered employment in the school. The proprietor has also been cleared as a fit to own the school. Furthermore staff are only appointed after checking their fitness and qualifications. All documents relating to staff appointments are kept securely in staff files.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The educational and residential/boarding accommodations are of a very high standard. Some of the accommodation is outstanding. Educational accommodation is offered on three sites, Fullerton House; Mexborough and Hesley Village. The buildings are well decorated, in good repair; they are safe, hygienic, well lit; heated and ventilated. Fittings are appropriate and the flooring is universally safe.

All the buildings at Fullerton House are in good state of repair, and where repairs are needed, they are undertaken with the minimum of delay. All classroom buildings are appropriate in size for their purpose. Some of the demountable buildings are sufficiently large to accommodate physical activities such as dance. They also comfortably accommodate the whole school population for those occasions, such as assemblies, when all the school comes together. The school benefits from a number of “cool off” rooms, such as the white room, and the dark room. These are used appropriately for pupils who need the particular specialist input to enable them, swiftly and effectively, to reintegrate with their peers. Outside areas include reasonably sized grassed and hard areas. The light and airy dining area is arranged on a café basis and promotes healthy eating.

The Mexborough site, a converted pool hall, offers a range of facilities for diverse activities, such as woodwork and cookery. A significant feature of this clean, tidy and warm building is its central position in the town’s high street. This affords pupils access to a range of facilities in the town, in close proximity, such as banks; post office and cafes. These significantly enhance their preparation for adult life and their socialisation, promoting economic well-being effectively.

The Hesley Village site offers outstanding educational accommodation. The hundred acres of the site provides an extensive Victorian Hall, together with a Chapel, which recently held a carol concert. It also provides safe country facilities, which enable students to engage in agricultural and horticultural activities. There is good ongoing development of the site through the building of a “village”. This includes shops, workshops, village hall, bank, post-office, doctor’s waiting room, hairdresser and bus stop. It creates an educational ambience which provides good experience of the world of work and promotes enjoyment in a safe and non-threatening environment.

The high standards of the educational accommodation are replicated in the high standards of the residential/ boarding accommodation. A very strongly focussed plan on “student needs” has resulted in the purchase of and the refurbishment of a number of small “family homes”. These units offer pupils small-group residential accommodation, of the highest specification. They foster a sense of community living, making an effective contribution to pupils’ self esteem and self worth.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

The school provides a good range of information for parents and local authorities through a well informed prospectus. However local authorities are not yet provided with a breakdown of income and expenditure incurred by the school for pupils. The school has already requested guidance on this from the DfES. Parents receive very detailed reports on their child's progress and both parents and pupils have very good opportunities to attend a wide range of regular reviews, such as the annual review of their child's statement. Excellent use is made of ICT to provide very clear visual presentations for parents, pupils and other participants in these reviews.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets nearly all of the requirements for registration

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 an annual account of the income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of all individual pupils to be submitted to the various Local Authorities and on request to the Secretary of State (paragraph 6(7)).*

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

The school has a detailed and comprehensive complaints procedure which is clearly outlined for parents in an informative policy. All parents are provided with a copy when their child is admitted and the school makes further copies available at parents' request. The complaints procedure includes clear time-scales for the informal and formal stages of a complaint and includes an appeal stage by a panel which includes an independent representative.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Fullerton House School
DfES Number:	3716011
Type of school:	Residential Special
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	8 – 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 31 Girls: 10 Total: 41
Number of boarders:	Boys: 31 Girls: 10 Total: 41
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys: 31 Girls: 10 Total: 41
Annual fees (boarders):	£234,377
Address of school:	off Tickhill Square Denaby Doncaster South Yorkshire DN12 4AR
Telephone number:	01709 861663
Fax number:	01709 869635
Email address:	doconnor@hesleygroup.co.uk
Headteacher:	Mr David O'Connor
Proprietor:	The Hesley Group Limited
Reporting Inspector:	Mr Declan McCarthy
Date of inspection:	17 – 20 January 2006

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