

Inspection report

Marchant-Holliday School

Independent special school

DfES ref no: 933/6089

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 6 – 8 February 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

The Marchant-Holliday School is an approved independent residential special school for boys. It provides places for up to 32 fortnightly boarding pupils and eight day pupils aged from 7 - 12 years. At the time of the inspection there were 30 pupils attending the school. The school was established in 1952 and is now a charitable organisation. The school is situated in rural surroundings near Wincanton in Somerset. The school takes pupils from the South and South-West areas including the Channel Islands.

The school caters for pupils who experience severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and all pupils have statements of special educational need. Most pupils have been excluded from mainstream schools and have spent some time receiving home tuition or in a pupil referral unit. More recently the school has made provision for pupils with Asperger's syndrome, attention deficit disorders, dyslexia and attachment disorders. A new residential building was completed in 2004.

Summary of main findings

The Marchant-Holliday school is a good school with many outstanding features. It is extremely successful in meeting its aim of offering positive learning experiences to pupils in a secure and caring environment. Pupils are valued and respected, and they respond very well to the warm and caring ethos. Pupils make good academic progress. They make excellent progress in their personal and social development. The school offers a very appropriate curriculum and a range of experiences to meet their learning, behavioural and emotional needs. The residential provision is of a very high standard, with excellent levels of care provided in a welcoming and homely setting. Welfare, health and safety issues are very well managed. The quality of teaching is consistently good, with a number of excellent features. The use of information to track how well various groups of pupils are doing is in the early stages of development. More use could be made of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance teaching and learning. The accommodation and resources are of good quality, and the newly opened residential facility is most attractive. Parents hold the school in high regard and are fulsome in their praise of its work in providing a safe, secure and happy environment where pupils enjoy their schooling. The school meets all the regulations.

What the school does well:

- it provides a supportive environment where excellent teamwork enables pupils to settle quickly and to become receptive to learning;
- it provides good quality teaching, which is often outstanding, enabling pupils who are able, to achieve good results in national tests at Key Stage 2;
- it helps pupils to make significant improvements in their emotional, social and personal development;
- it provides a very suitable curriculum, which is well planned and monitored; and
- it has an active governing body, which provides support and challenge, so that the school can continue to improve and to adapt to the changing needs of its pupils.

Next Steps

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

- develop the use of interactive whiteboards to further enhance the teaching and learning throughout the school; and
- analyse assessment information to determine how different groups of pupil within the school perform.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding. The school offers a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. Much care has gone into ensuring that enough time has been allocated for each subject. The curriculum policy is comprehensive and places emphasis on the importance of trusting relationships between pupils and staff. This is crucial and the school is very effective in achieving this aim. The curriculum is successful in engaging pupils in learning. The development of positive attitudes to learning helps pupils to improve their confidence and self-esteem.

Considerable work has been carried out since the last inspection to improve the planning and monitoring of the curriculum. There are now comprehensive long, medium and short-term plans. The thoroughness of the planning ensures that pupils build upon previous knowledge and skills effectively. The planning takes good account of the national primary strategies where appropriate. The deputy head teacher rigorously monitors the curriculum. Governors also take an active role in this monitoring and each governor has specific subject responsibilities.

There is a strong emphasis on core skills including ICT. The curriculum is highly appropriate to the needs and abilities of pupils, including those who are on the autistic disorder spectrum. The emphasis on practical and active learning is a very good feature. The curriculum enables all pupils to make good progress regardless of their abilities and to achieve well, despite their often turbulent previous experiences.

The limited opportunities for performing arts, highlighted at the last inspection, have now been greatly extended and there is very good provision for music with a visiting specialist teacher and opportunities for drama. A notable feature has been the introduction of themed days, for example a multi-cultural day and a friendship day. These days place a valuable emphasis on creative subjects. Pupils work together on activities, such as cookery, music and making friendship bracelets and quilts. Pupils enjoy these special days and look forward to them with great anticipation.

Pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) are reviewed termly and every child has their targets displayed in their classroom as a visual reminder. The targets cover numeracy, literacy and behaviour. The residential provision makes an excellent contribution to the curriculum by ensuring that pupils are receptive to learning. The school places a strong emphasis on developing pupils' emotional resilience by establishing stability and a continuity of approaches through good levels of communication between residential and school staff.

There is an impressive range of extra-curricular activities on offer. The residential provision provides a wide range of out-of-school activities at weekends and evenings. These include sports, music, cubs and scouts, church events and visits to places of interest. The extra-curricular activities make a good contribution to pupils keeping healthy through regular exercise.

The personal and social education programme helps pupils to stay safe and healthy. There is suitable guidance on substance misuse and sex and relationships. Assemblies and circle times are used effectively so that pupils can share their views and learn about caring for one another. Healthy eating is promoted through excellent wholesome food. Some pupils arrive at the school only willing to eat a restricted range of foods. However, the matron and other staff encourage pupils to develop a healthier and varied diet. The school has achieved a 'Healthy Schools' award.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is good and often outstanding. The use of practical approaches captivates pupils' attention and this results in their behaviour being much improved. In one design and technology lesson for example, pupils explored various types of ethnic musical instruments and then made their own instruments in a '30 minute challenge'. They were then able to evaluate each other's work in a mature and sensible fashion. There is a good flow of information between residential and education staff. They work well together so that targets for pupils can be shared across all aspects of the school. Staff know their pupils well; this is key to managing their behaviour successfully and with sensitivity. There is a clear behaviour policy and all staff have been trained in behaviour management.

Lessons are well planned and the sharing of clear learning objectives at the start of the lesson informs pupils what to focus on. IEP targets are placed on each pupil's desk and this reminds them what they are working towards. These targets are regularly reviewed so pupils do not mark time. Lessons are often taught with great enthusiasm and passion, which strongly motivates the class. Lessons are broken up into a variety of different activities to help pupils maintain their concentration. Through effective teaching, pupils make good progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, equipping them with useful skills and knowledge for their future.

Teachers are confident to experiment with paired and group work, giving valuable opportunities for pupils to develop co-operative skills in a range of situations. Teachers use ICT effectively, but there is no provision for the use of interactive whiteboards in classrooms to further enhance teaching and learning.

There is regular ongoing assessment of pupils' progress. Where appropriate, pupils undertake national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 and achieve well. Optional tests are used in Year 5, and predicted grades are set. The school has a wealth of assessment information to demonstrate the good progress that individual pupils make. However, this information has not yet been used to discover how various groups of pupils are achieving across subjects.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is excellent. Their cultural development is good. Every aspect of the day has a well-structured routine. This provides the safe, predictable security the boys need and is transformational in helping them to develop the right habits and attitudes to succeed. When they arrive at the school pupils are often traumatised and have experienced severe difficulties in their lives. The school seeks to help them overcome this and work towards a bright and successful future. As a result pupils develop confidence to put forward their viewpoint in discussion or to try new things. Every opportunity is taken in lessons and in the residences to raise pupils' self-esteem and show them how well they are doing, guiding them in behaviour, relationships and personal goals.

There is highly skilled guidance to help pupils distinguish right from wrong and to accept responsibility for their behaviour. Pupils report that they trust the adults around them. In lessons this results in a willingness to learn and do well, often for the first time. Pupils help each other, care for their friends and are respectful to the staff. There is very little bullying and pupils feel safe, knowing that they will receive the right help in dealing with any bullying. Behaviour in and around the school is good overall and in lessons is sometimes excellent.

Pupils increasingly show initiative and have a good understanding of how they can contribute to community life. There is no school council to provide experience of how a democracy works, but assembly is used imaginatively to give pupils a voice in the day-to-day activities of the school. Pupils are helped to be responsible in clearing up at mealtimes and keeping their rooms in good order. They also contribute well to charitable fundraising. During citizenship lessons pupils develop a good understanding of public services and institutions.

The school pays careful attention to diversity in the world through many subjects and this means that pupils learn to appreciate different cultures and religions. In English, geography, music and art for example, pupils study cultural differences. In religious education they begin to understand how different people celebrate their festivals. There is a very strong spiritual dimension to the lives of the pupils as they realise, often for the first time, how amazing the world around them can be. Lessons, assemblies and the many activities and visits undertaken support this developing spiritual awareness.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school makes excellent provision for the health, safety and well-being of its pupils. Thorough policies and procedures are well implemented by all staff. Detailed risk assessments are routinely undertaken and their purpose is understood by staff and pupils. All staff understand the child protection procedures. Regular training, including suitable induction of new staff keeps everyone well informed about the high standards expected by the school.

There is a positive approach to managing behaviour, including, where appropriate, the occasional use of physical restraint. Staff and pupils are fully aware of what strategies and rewards are used to promote good behaviour. All pupils have a special person who acts as key worker and they can also talk to the independent visitor. Staff know the boys very well and the transition between care and education is smooth. Attendance at the school is very good.

Medical advice and treatment is readily available, as the matron is a State Registered Nurse. There is also regular support from other professionals, such as a counsellor and an independent advocate.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

There are very thorough procedures in place for recruiting staff to ensure that they are well-qualified and suitable to work with children. All staff are required to undergo checks with the Criminal Records Bureau at enhanced level and are not allowed to begin work until they are cleared.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The school is in an attractive setting with extensive grounds. Classrooms are of a satisfactory size and quality. There are specialist facilities to support the teaching of art, design and technology, science, ICT and physical education.

The newly opened residential accommodation is an excellent facility. It is pleasant, warm, and provides a homely atmosphere for pupils. There are plans to refurbish the remaining residential accommodation to a similar standard. Pupils' bedrooms are spacious and nicely decorated with suitable furniture. Bedrooms are personalised with pupils' own pictures and belongings.

There are ample outdoor hard playing surfaces. The extensive grounds are well kept, and are used very effectively to support aspects of the curriculum such as physical education and science and also for a wide range of recreational activities, such as quad-biking and climbing. There is also an outdoor swimming pool, which is used in the summer and pupils have access to a nearby indoor pool throughout the year.

Overall, the high standard of the accommodation meets the needs of the pupils and the requirements of the curriculum well. The residential facilities make a very effective contribution to the 24-hour curriculum.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

The school provides a very good range of information for parents and other partners. The brochure is attractive and gives an effective overview of the school and the residential provision. The school's aims are clearly laid out and the curriculum is explained. Almost all parents and carers who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire reported good communication and positive links. The annual reports of pupils' progress are sufficiently detailed and parents and carers are positive about the good progress being made. Parents hold the school in very high regard and one parent commented that the school had 'turned my child's life around'.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

There is a clear and simple complaints procedure, which is easily understood by parents and carers. In addition to initial informal measures, there are well-structured formal procedures by which complaints can be considered fairly and objectively. The complaints panel is made up of independent members. The school records the number of complaints received and at what stage they were resolved. There have been no complaints that have progressed to the formal stage in the last five years.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Marchant-Holliday School
DfES Number:	933/6089
Type of school:	Special school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	7 – 12 years
Gender of pupils:	Boys
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	30
Number of boarders:	22
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	30
Annual fees (day pupils):	£20,571
Annual fees (boarders):	£51,522
Address of school:	North Cheriton Templecombe Somerset BA8 0AH
Telephone number:	01963 33234
Fax number:	01963 33432
Email address:	Office@marchant-holliday.co.uk
Principal:	Mr J Robertson
Proprietor:	Marchant-Holliday School Ltd
Reporting Inspector:	Mr Frank Price
Date of inspection:	6 – 8 February 2006

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