

Inspection report

Swaay School

Independent special school

DfES ref no: 870/6580

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 12 - 15 June 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

Swaay School is an independent, day special school located on two sites in Reading and Bracknell. It is part of a residential provision which provides both education and treatment for up to 18 boys, aged between 11 and 18 years and who have specific emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). They come to the school from 16 local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland and all are '*looked after*' by their respective authority. Pupils live in one of seven homes, which operate collaboratively as part of a therapeutic community and are provided by Swaay Limited. There are ten pupils with statements of special educational need (SEN). All others are at different stages of the national SEN Code of Practice. Pupils remain at the school for a minimum of two years.

The school aims: '*to work together to support the whole development of each young person towards responsible adulthood. Through practice based on the Swaay philosophy we offer the highest levels of care; an individualised curriculum for each young person to reach his full educational potential and a personalised programme for each to improve his social and emotional skills.*'

Summary of main findings

Swaay School is successful in its aim of supporting young people and enabling them to re-engage in learning and complete their education. They make satisfactory progress. The quality of teaching and learning varies but is generally satisfactory. The curriculum is planned effectively to ensure that all pupils can make progress. The regularity and frequency of therapy sessions, provided by the organisation, impinges on the continuity and rate of learning. Progress is monitored carefully through good assessment procedures although this information could be used more effectively to improve teaching and raise pupils' achievement. The provision for their personal development is good. Monitoring of pupils' behaviour within the school is good and they receive effective support to improve this. Older pupils particularly show growing maturity. The quality of the accommodation, as well as its location on different sites, limits the effectiveness of what the school can provide. Some deficiencies in health and safety provision were brought to the attention of the management. The school has firm plans to move to different premises.

What the school does well:

- it provides a challenging curriculum which re-engages the pupils in education and enables them to make progress;

- it provides satisfactory teaching, although the accommodation limits the impact of this;
- its staff are good role models, give significant commitment to the pupils and work as an effective team on their behalf;
- it monitors well the pupils' behaviour and supports them in its improvement; and
- it provides structure to the lives of pupils and focuses well on their individual needs, enabling them to make good progress in taking responsibility for their behaviour.

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

- improve the procedures to promote the welfare, health and safety of pupils as identified in section 3 of this report;
- carry out the checks to confirm the medical fitness of staff prior to their appointment as indicated in section 4;
- improve the quality of the accommodation, as noted in section 5;
- provide full information for parents and other partners, as specified in section 6; and
- ensure that the school's complaints policy complies with the requirements detailed in section 7.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The school provides a good curriculum which comprises both social and academic elements. The social curriculum includes the therapy provided by specialists within the organisation. The academic curriculum offers the core subjects of English, mathematics and science along with information and communication technology (ICT), physical education (PE), art, music, theatre studies, design and technology (DT), study skills and careers education. Personal, social and health education is provided in conjunction with the therapeutic staff. Pupils also study a range of modules within the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). Where pupils have particular learning needs, the curriculum is appropriately modified, such as providing booster lessons in literacy. Sufficient time is allowed within the timetable to provide a satisfactory balance to the curriculum but the frequency and regularity of therapy provision impinges on the continuity of pupils' learning.

Each subject has an appropriate policy, which is underpinned by good schemes of work. These follow the requirements of the National Curriculum. They are planned well and contribute to the effective monitoring of pupils' academic progress. The ASDAN course is managed very effectively and this provides an avenue of success for lower attaining pupils. Currently, some pupils are studying this course at the silver level.

All pupils follow courses which lead to national accreditation. The range of these is good and enables all pupils to leave the school with qualifications appropriate to their chosen career path. A particular strength of the provision is that, although pupils' attainments are wide, it is highly individualised and offers each pupil the greatest chance to achieve national accreditation. In the later stages of Key Stage 4 the curriculum changes emphasis to include a focus on routes towards academic or vocational achievement, or a combination of both. This is a positive feature of the curriculum. Each programme is negotiated between pupils and staff based on an individual's academic abilities and preferences for future career plans. Part of this programme also includes attendance at a local agricultural college, where pupils experience a range of opportunities which help inform decisions about their career.

Where weaknesses exist within the provision, these are attributable to the effects of the accommodation. The school cannot provide appropriate facilities for art, DT, science or PE. The school management does what it can to minimise the effects of this, for example, by hiring local sports facilities for the PE programme.

Where pupils have a statement of SEN, the provision is suitably focused to address its requirements. Where a pupil may work at levels below his chronological age, for example in literacy, additional lessons are provided in order to raise his levels of achievement. This reflects the very good planning and provision within the English curriculum. Individual education plans are also constructed for each pupil. A strength of these is that they include pupils' views on which goals they need to

achieve. Their impact is constrained, however, because some of the goals are too wide ranging.

Careers education and guidance is good. This includes a full programme of work-related skills as well as opportunities to experience workplace conditions. Pupils are also taught how to conduct themselves at interview and this contributes effectively to their self-esteem. The school has appropriate arrangements with the local Connexions service to assist with pupils' future placements. On reaching school leaving age pupils continue to be supported by the school to take up places at local colleges.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is generally satisfactory. When pupils are admitted to the school they have negative views of learning as well as experiences of disrupted education. Teachers confront these attitudes successfully and re-engage pupils in the process of learning. Most pupils achieve accreditation in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), Entry Level certificates in a range of Assessment and Qualifications Alliance study units, National Vocational Qualifications or ASDAN. In 2005 five pupils achieved accreditation in GCSE English within the range C - F; four were successful in mathematics in the range D - F. Pupils were also successful in art, music and ICT. In addition, pupils also achieved success in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.

The most successful lessons have common features. Among these are very good quality relationships between staff and pupils. Whilst teachers use these to empathise well with pupils, they also set them challenging tasks based upon what pupils already understand. Pupils have a tendency to be volatile when faced with adversity but teachers manage any outbursts very effectively, through their calm and consistent approach. Praise is used appropriately in order to encourage greater effort by pupils. Pupils respect staff and sometimes complete their work because of the quality of the relationships. These lessons also have high expectations of pupils. The brisk pace and good use of time make the 60 minute session times appear quite short. Pupils achieve well in such lessons.

Good lessons also include a variation in the methods of learning. In an English lesson, for example, the theme of *'Growing old'* was explored very imaginatively through the use of poetry, music and discussion. Pupils were challenged to identify the characteristics of people whom they perceived to be old. One responded with *'My nan knits; I don't know a nan that doesn't'*. The lesson was challenging, included a very good variation in method and was presented at a pace that engaged the pupils' interest throughout. The impact on their learning was significant and they showed this in later written work, but such lessons are not common.

Some lessons are less effective. These tend to have low expectations and pupils too easily influence the level and pace of what is achieved. The lessons also fail to explain to pupils what they will learn. The impact of this is that pupils fail to take responsibility for their learning and do not allow teachers to assess the outcomes of their teaching. A further weakness in such lessons is that teachers fail to extend the learning based on what pupils can already do. A weakness common to all lessons is

the failure, to use the services of the classroom support worker. In almost all lessons observed, their skills were under-employed.

Generally lessons are planned thoughtfully and correlate closely to the schemes of work for each subject. The best of these plans include tasks which are closely related to pupils' previous work and which extend their understanding. Where planning is less effective, it is because the expectations of teachers are too low and the character of the lessons becomes one of expediency.

Assessment procedures are generally very good. For example, those used in English and science are exemplary. However, the marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. Often this involves a cursory tick to signify work as correct. It provides no clue for pupils as to how they might further improve.

Resources to support learning are satisfactory. ICT is used well. Pupils have individual access to laptop computers which they use, for example, to draft and re-draft their work.

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 spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. Pupils make good progress in developing their self-confidence and self-esteem. They tackle challenging activities in a structured and supportive setting. Drama and discussion are used very effectively to encourage pupils to reflect on their actions and to resolve tensions.

Pupils' moral development is good. Staff encourage them to develop their understanding of right and wrong and respect for the rule of law. School rules are used positively to develop better relationships with those in authority. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, both towards each other and to adults. The school's behaviour management policy gives clear guidance for dealing with any shortcomings. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the school's expectations, and they are clear about the associated rewards and sanctions.

Staff are good role models and this promotes pupils' social development. Pupils are actively encouraged to respect the views and opinions of others, as well as expressing their own. As part of the school's provision, pupils make organised visits to shops, restaurants and other public places to develop their confidence and participation in the life of the community. For example, some pupils undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme take on voluntary work at a local animal rescue centre.

Pupils' cultural development is good. This is evident in the positive relationships that exist between the different cultural groups within the school. It is also supported effectively within the curriculum, through opportunities for pupils to develop their

knowledge and understanding of the religions, customs and cultures of different countries.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Although there is some effective provision which promotes the welfare, health and safety of pupils, there are weaknesses in significant aspects.

The school has appropriate policies for the prevention of bullying and the promotion of good behaviour. These are implemented effectively. Any incidents are dealt with promptly, in line with the school's sanctions policy, and the information is duly recorded. Admission and attendance procedures are appropriate and pupils are suitably supervised throughout the school day. The First Aid policy and supporting procedures are effective and there is a satisfactory level of fire safety; the latter endorsed by the local Fire Officer's recent report.

The school has a child protection policy and appropriate procedures are in place. Staff receive regular training and pupils know there is a named adult to whom they might turn. However, the school does not meet the most recent recommendations because the proprietors have not undertaken an annual review of the school's procedures for safeguarding pupils and commented on their effectiveness.

The school's most recent health and safety policy is in draft form and follows a generic policy which is dated 2000. It does not take sufficient account of the most recent guidance provided by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). Some health and safety issues were brought to the attention of the school. Risk assessments, relating to visits away from the school, are unsatisfactory and the procedures for authorising these are not consistently carried out.

The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

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:

- *ensure that the proprietor undertakes an annual review of the school's policies and procedures relating to the safeguarding of pupils (paragraph 3(2)(b));*
- *make sure that comprehensive risk assessments are undertaken and authorised for all educational visits (paragraph 3(2)(c)); and*
- *review and revise the school's health and safety policy to reflect the latest DfES guidance and current statutory requirements (paragraph 3(4)).*

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school undertakes extensive checks before confirming the appointment of staff. However, there is no evidence to indicate that checks have been carried out to show their medical fitness.

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:

- *ensure that, prior to the confirmation of the appointment of staff, appropriate checks have been carried out to confirm their medical fitness (paragraph 4(c)).*

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The organisation has realised the shortcomings of the present buildings and has already purchased an alternative site which it plans to convert into a single provision for education. The school is located on two sites, some 20 miles apart. One of these, in Reading, is a former Victorian residence and the other is an annex to a primary school and community centre in Bracknell. The Reading site has previously been used as the organisation's offices. Although it has not been converted specifically for the purposes of education, it provides several teaching rooms which are of adequate size. There are no specialist facilities to support a Key Stage 4 curriculum. At the Reading site the land falls away to the rear of the property and there is no satisfactory space in which pupils might play or relax between lessons. At the Bracknell site the pupils' play area is also used as a car park. Neither site has appropriate facilities for pupils who may become ill.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets all but two of the requirements.

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

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

- *provide appropriate facilities for pupils who may become ill (paragraph 5(l)); and*
- *make appropriate arrangements for providing outside space for pupils to play safely (paragraph 5(t)).*

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

The school provides parents and other partners with information covering all aspects of its provision for pupils, including a summary statement about the educational

provision. Further information is provided on the organisation's website and in a recently produced 'profile' document. However, there are a number of omissions of the detail of information which is required to be provided for parents and other partners. These are listed below.

In response to the questionnaire completed prior to the inspection, parents and others expressed their satisfaction with the school. Reports, written each term, provide good information about the progress and attainment of pupils. The school also provides local authorities with appropriate financial information as well as taking a full part in the annual review process for those pupils with statements.

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:

- *provide all parents or guardians of pupils and prospective pupils with the following information:*
 - *the school's address and telephone number and the name of the headteacher (paragraph 6(2)(a));*
 - *the address and telephone number of its registered or principal office (paragraph 6(2)(b));*
 - *a statement of the school's ethos (including any religious ethos) and aims (paragraph 6(2)(d));*
 - *particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for admissions, discipline and exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e)); and*
 - *particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements and for pupils for whom English is an additional language (paragraph 6(2)(f));*

and in addition;

- *ensure that the following information is available, and that parents or guardians of pupils and prospective pupils are made aware they may request it:*
 - *particulars of the curriculum offered by the school (paragraph 6(2)(g));*
 - *particulars of policies relating to bullying, child protection, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, and sanctions adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving (paragraph 6(2)(h));*
 - *particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations (paragraph 6(2)(i));*

- *details of the complaints procedure adopted by the school, together with details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j)); and*
- *the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 6(2)(k)).*

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

The school does not have effective procedures for handling complaints. The requirements for this are listed below.

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:

- *put in place a written complaints procedure (paragraph 7(a));*
- *ensure that the procedure is available on request to parents or guardians of pupils and prospective pupils (paragraph 7(b));*
- *set out clear timescales for the management of the complaint (paragraph 7(c));*
- *provide for a formal complaint to be made in writing if parents or guardians are not satisfied with the response to an informal complaint (paragraph 7(e));*
- *where parents or guardians are not satisfied with the response to a written complaint provide for the establishment of a hearing before a panel appointed by the proprietor of at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint (paragraph 7(f));*
- *where there is a panel hearing of a complaint ensure that one person on the panel is independent of the management and running of the school (paragraph 7(g));*
- *allow for parents or guardians to attend the panel hearing, and, if they wish, to be accompanied (paragraph 7(h));*
- *provide for the panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulate that the complainant, proprietors and headteacher, and, where relevant, the person complained about, should be given a copy of any findings and recommendations (paragraph 7(i));*

- *provide for written records to be kept of all complaints indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage, or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing (paragraph 7(j)); and*
- *ensure that correspondence, statements and records of complaints are kept confidential (paragraph 7(k)).*

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Swaay School
DfES Number:	870/6580
Type of school:	Special school for pupils with specific emotional and behavioural difficulties
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Male
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	17
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	10
Annual fees:	£31,740
Address of school:	590 Wokingham Road Earley Reading RG1 6HN
Telephone number:	0118 9261010
Fax number:	0118 9665454
Email address:	rosemary@swaay.co.uk
Headteacher:	Mrs Jennifer Collighan
Proprietors:	Mr Roger Gibson & Mrs Lesley Baker-Payne
Reporting Inspector:	Mr Tom Smith
Date of inspection:	12 - 15 June 2006

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