

Inspection report

**MacIntyre (Wingrave) School
Independent special school**

DfES ref no: 825/6011

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 26 – 29 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

MacIntyre School, Wingrave is a mixed residential special school which provides for children and young people between 10 and 19 years of age. It has been established in a rural setting in the Vale of Aylesbury in an old manor house, with a further six modern residential houses. There are extensive grounds in part of which a new school is currently being built. It provides for residential students for 52 weeks with 40 weeks educational provision. The school is part of the MacIntyre Lifelong Learning Division. It is a registered charity and one of a small group of two schools and one further education college run by the company.

Places are provided for students with severe learning difficulties, often with medical and other complex needs, including autistic spectrum disorder. All the students have severe communication difficulties and varying degrees of challenging behaviour. There are 22 students of compulsory school age, all of whom have statements of special educational needs stating that they have severe learning disabilities. Most have experienced previous disruption in their education. Currently there are 34 residential students and one day student. Residential provision was inspected by the Commission for Social Care Inspectorates (CSCI) in March 2006.

The school documentation states that '*Six Promises*' underpin its ethos and values. These are clearly expressed in the prospectus which further emphasises that the aim is to provide students '*with a happy and secure environment where they can be challenged to achieve in all areas of their lives*'. The prospectus further emphasises the importance of meeting students' individual needs and that '*expectations are kept high so that students learn to make real choices in their lives*' and that providing '*a calm atmosphere of mutual trust and respect is fundamental to life at MacIntyre School*'.

Summary of main findings

MacIntyre School has many strengths. Students are valued and respected and they respond appropriately to the warm and caring ethos of the school. Staff are dedicated to ensure that students' welfare is promoted effectively. Students enjoy their life at the school and benefit from a wide range of after school activities and visits to the local and wider communities. The effective teaching enables students to make good progress in developing their communication skills. Nearly all students exhibit some level of challenging

behaviour, but with good levels of support make good progress. Provision for developing students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is very good. The curriculum is developing and is relevant to the needs and aptitudes of the students whose achievements are carefully recorded. However, these records are not always consistent across the school which has yet to develop a way of demonstrating the very small steps of students' progress. The school has undergone some significant changes in the last twelve months. These have included changes in key management positions, restructuring of support staff, and the appointment of some subject specialists. The changes related to support staff are recent and this has led to some inconsistencies of staffing in classes. The new purpose built accommodation due to be opened in January 2007 will replace the existing school and will provide excellent facilities.

What the school does well:

- its quality of teaching is good;
- it cares for its students very well;
- its communication skills are promoted carefully through a range of strategies;
- its students behaviour is managed both effectively and sensitively;
- its staff thoroughly understand the needs of individual students; and
- its students are supported well in developing their self-confidence and self-esteem.

What the school must do to comply with the regulations:

The school meets all the regulations

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

Regulatory requirements are met but 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:

- make assessment more consistent across the school and devise ways to show small steps of progress; and
- improve continuity of support staffing in classes.

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 satisfactory and is relevant to the needs and aptitudes of the students. Subject policies are brief and a number need considerable further development. However, medium term planning is satisfactory. Overall, planning is better in the further education department, because it is linked to externally accredited courses. Strategies established to make students' timetables more individual will further enhance the provision. Planning across the school for the curriculum is largely based on commercially available publications and there are plans to use updated materials to give teachers a more comprehensive range of strategies and approaches in meeting students' complex needs.

Preparation of students for adulthood is good. Effective use is made of local community facilities such as the leisure centre, shops and library to support students' learning. They also visit other adult services, run by the company to prepare them for their next stage of life.

Work experience and college placements are available, but on an individual basis as appropriate to the abilities of students. Good use is made of giving students work experience on the school site, such as running the tuck shop and the baked potato café. The residential facilities are also used to give students daily living skills such as carrying out domestic chores. Currently one student has work experience at a recycling plant and another student attends a local college for two days a week. There are plans to introduce work-related learning into the secondary department. There are suitable links with the Connexions service to support preparation for students' next stage of life.

The school places a strong emphasis on promoting student's communication skills through a 'total communication' approach. This is appropriate and an important aspect of the strategies used for developing students' independence. They are encouraged to make simple choices wherever possible. Equipping students with better communication skills also brings about improvements in their behaviour. The speech and language therapist makes an effective contribution to the communication strategy across the school and has been instrumental in developing communication profiles for each student.

There is a good range of extra-curricular activities on offer after school. These include African drumming, cookery, gardening and art club and trampolining. Students enjoy these activities and they make a good contribution to their health and enjoyment.

Provision is weaker for physical education (PE) due to restricted on-site facilities, although students participate in swimming and horse riding.

Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is also limited, but will be improved with the new school facilities. Specialist teachers have been appointed to help in the delivery of PE, music, drama and ICT.

The role of subject co-ordinators is not fully developed. Currently there are no subject action plans to guide developments over the coming year and co-ordinators do not have enough opportunity to monitor the teaching and learning of their subjects.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is good overall. There is a good mix of whole class and individual work. Whole class activities provide important opportunities for students to socialise and co-operate. Relationships between students and staff are good and are based on respect, trust and a thorough understanding of students' complex and diverse needs. This is often key to managing behaviour sensitively. Staff place a strong emphasis on non-confrontational approaches using de-escalation and distraction techniques. Students are respected and every opportunity is taken to celebrate their achievements

A good feature of teaching is the 'total communication approach'. Teachers are skilled at using a range of methods, such as symbols, photographs and objects to aid students' communication. An example of this approach is the use of 'vertical timetables' which explains to students the structure of the day in a symbol format. Each student has a very helpful communication profile, which sets out clearly out the communication strategies best suited to them individually. Pen portraits of students are valuable in giving essential information about their needs and levels of understanding.

In the best teaching, teachers are skilled at engaging and maintaining students' attention. In one literacy lesson a story was told to students using objects related to the book. Students took pleasure in feeling the objects and making the appropriate signs. This encouraged good levels of interaction and participation.

The quality of staffing in classes is inconsistent due to recent re-structuring. This means that teachers do not always have the same support staff in class, which restricts opportunities to build consistency. There is no joint planning time to allow effective liaison. ICT is underused and resources are inadequate. However, in the new school building each classroom will be equipped with interactive whiteboards to support teaching and learning.

The school assesses students' attainments using P-levels. Students are working well below National Curriculum levels. Assessment practice has a number of strengths. However, teachers' assessments of students' work are not consistent across the school and do not indicate clearly how work was achieved or what level of attainment students have reached. The school does not have measures which are sophisticated enough to show students' small steps of progress.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school makes very good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The provision for these aspects of students' development fully reflects the ethos of the school and the mission statement which includes reference to its values, the school's 'six promises' and the cross-curricular themes which underpin the provision. These are contained in the prospectus and the statement of purpose.

Students are effectively encouraged by a range of activities to develop their self-knowledge and self-esteem. For example, students of compulsory school age took great pleasure in their regular visit to a local leisure centre where they showed considerable confidence in the water. In a tutor group session older students were encouraged to recognise one another's qualities and personalities. In the same class they were encouraged to spend time in quiet reflection whilst focusing on the flame of a candle. Students of all ages are encouraged to be responsible for their own property, to respect others and the school's property, but also to have the confidence to share.

The school has clear rules and students are encouraged to recognise and accept them. Regular school visits and activities in a range of contexts encourage students to interact with the local and wider community. Knowledge of public institutions and services is encouraged through aspects of the curriculum which include citizenship. Visitors to the school add to this dimension of the student's experience. For example, visits by the fire brigade, police and emergency services during work related events.

Opportunities to develop skills of social interaction and to take responsibility are given high priority by the school. This is encouraged regularly through the older students organising the tuck shop and a group of students representing most age groups acting as members of the school council. These activities are very well supported by staff.

Support for developing students' appreciation and understanding of other cultures is very good. A number of aspects of the curriculum are effectively linked to other countries and cultures and a wide range of religious festivals are celebrated.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the students

Students at MacIntyre School are well cared for. Arrangements to ensure the safety and security of students are very good. They have positive relationships with staff who demonstrate dedication in dealing with their complex needs. In line with the school's emphasis on communication in the curriculum, staff take great care to communicate effectively with students. This has an important influence on their ability to develop positive relationships with them, address their welfare needs and keep them safe. The high quality of welfare provision, including the healthy diet provided for the students at school reflects the most recent report by the Commission for Social Care Inspectorates (CSCI) which focused on the residential provision. The school draws on a range of specialist professional advice and support in assessing and providing for the students from a range of outside agencies. These include an occupational therapist, a speech and language therapist, a clinical psychologist and a physiotherapist. The school might wish to consider how this aspect of their provision might be further enhanced.

The school has a good range of policies relating to students' health, welfare and safety and which are appropriate to their development. Policies place appropriate emphasis on ensuring clear procedures and routines, for example with respect to First Aid and to fire emergencies. The school receives regular recorded visits by the local fire authority. Although the policy relating to the health and safety of students engaged on activities outside school is very new, the procedures to support this important aspect of the school curriculum are thorough and procedures are well understood by staff.

The school provides high levels of supervision for all students in school and staff are vigilant in supporting students' safety in a range of activities in and out of school. Behaviour is managed very effectively. Careful and appropriate detailed records are maintained of incidents that occur and any injuries sustained. The maintenance of an admission register meets requirements. It includes the name of the placing authority. The one student who attends the school on a daily basis is above compulsory school age and her attendance is monitored appropriately.

The school treats all its students equally and makes adjustments in its provision to meet their diverse needs. However, although the residential parts of the school are modern, the main building is old and difficult to adapt to meet current needs. The school does not fulfil its duties currently under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) by not having developed a written three year plan which indicates how improvements will be made. However, a new school is under construction on adjacent land owned by the school. The plans for this building indicate that it will fully comply with the DDA.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

In order to fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act it needs to:

- *Provide a three year plan covering a three year period which indicates how accessibility of the school premises will be improved.*

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

Procedures for ensuring that checks of new staff to ensure their suitability to work with young people are thorough. Checks have been made on all staff in the school irrespective of the period that they have been employed. They include staff employed in the residential accommodation as well as the school. Checks include those to ensure their medical fitness as a matter of course. The administrative procedures associated with the checks are clearly understood and undertaken effectively by administrative staff. The procedures are supported effectively through good links between administrative staff in the school and the parent company.

The school employs a number of care assistants from overseas all of whom also receive Criminal Records Bureau checks. Other checks are undertaken with agencies who supply cover staff.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The main part of the school is housed in the 'old manor house'. This contains three classes for 16 to 19 year old students, as well as administration areas and offices. Classrooms for secondary aged students are housed in a converted stable block. The school has some specialist facilities such as a well-equipped sensory room, and soft play area. The current hall for PE is inadequate to meet the needs of all the students. However, the purpose built new school being built on the site and is due to open in January 2007. This will provide a very high standard of accommodation with suitable specialist areas, such as facilities for an on-site hydrotherapy pool.

The residential accommodation is relatively new and provides a homely atmosphere for students. There are six separate houses on the school site. Each student has their own bedroom, which is personalised and attractive. This provision was inspected by inspectors from CSCI, and received a positive report, earlier this year

The school makes good use of students' displays, which enhance the learning environment. These displays are generally used well to celebrate achievements and provide further support for learning. Externally, the school is set in very attractive grounds. There is an adventure playground consisting of swings and climbing apparatus with safety surfacing, an all weather courtyard and a playing field suitable for games such as football.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

The school provides all the required information and details of policies to parents of students and prospective parents and to carers. Parents are made aware of further information available from the school on request. The prospectus contains an appropriate range of information relating to the education and care of students. This is supported by information provided in the school's 'Statement of Purpose' document, which is given to all new parents and carers. Further, more extensive information is available on the school's website.

The prospectus and 'Statement of Purpose' document contain details of the schools' philosophy and ethos. Details of procedures for dealing with a range of situations relating to the specific needs of the students are clearly stated and helpful.

Several questionnaires returned by parents prior to the inspection, whilst supporting the care provided for their children, indicated that they would like more information about the progress that their children make. Nevertheless, inspectors found that the level of information held by the school both in terms of the personal as well as academic progress made by students is good. Parents are encouraged to visit their children and to speak with staff, indeed there were visits by parents to the school during the week of the inspection. Many parents are in regular contact with the school by telephone. Reports to parents are of good quality, indicating clearly what had been achieved and the nature of future targets for learning and development. The school might wish to consider how they could further develop their systems for communicating with parents.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school has a detailed and carefully prepared complaints policy which allows for them to be considered on an informal basis initially, but provides for more formal procedures and settings should they be required. Pre-inspection questionnaires returned by parents of students said that they both understand the school's procedures for handling complaints and that they feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	MacIntyre School, Wingrave
DfES Number:	825/6011
Type of school:	Residential school for students with severe learning difficulties
Status:	Independent Special
Age range of pupils:	10 -19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 27 Girls: 7 Total: 34
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys: 0 Girls: 1 Total: 1
Number of boarders:	Boys: 27 Girls: 7 Total: 34
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys: 27 Girls: 8 Total: 35
Annual fees (day pupils):	£39,249.00
Annual fees (boarders):	£102,000 - £170,000
Address of school:	Leighton Road, Wingrave, Buckinghamshire, HP22 4PD
Telephone number:	01296 681274
Fax number:	01296 681091
Email address:	wingrave@macintyrecharity.ort
Headteacher:	Adrienne Barnes
Proprietor:	MacIntyre
Reporting Inspector:	M. Thirkell
Date of inspection:	26 – 29 June, 2006

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