

Inspection report

Cotswold Chine School

Independent special school

DfES ref no: 916/6040

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

Cotswold Chine School is a residential special school near Stroud, in Gloucestershire, where the educational practice and the residential care provision are based around the ideas of Rudolf Steiner. It is owned and managed by a charity. The students come from all areas of the country and are placed by local authorities (LAs). They all have a statement of special educational need. The school is also registered as a children's home and students are resident for between 39 and 52 weeks a year. Students live in five separate house groups. They are between the ages of 9 and 18 years and have a range of learning difficulties and disabilities and medical needs, as well as social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. An increasing number of students referred to the school are autistic. There are more boys than girls, and the number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is very small. Many students have experienced disrupted education before coming to the school and their levels of attainment when they enter are well below those expected for students of a similar age. Some are reluctant learners while others are eager to achieve well. The school does not provide further education for the students over the age of 16, but provides opportunities for them to continue, or to catch up with, their education and to increase their independence. There are five class groups, all of which have students from more than one year.

Summary of main findings

Cotswold Chine School provides outstanding educational provision. It is highly effective in meeting the complex, and sometimes challenging, learning needs of all its students. The quality of teaching is outstanding because lessons are planned and taught at an individual level and the expectations for learning are based on extensive assessment. This is underpinned by a highly effective and unique curriculum planning and assessment system using information and communication technology (ICT) to its fullest. This provides an excellent means of tracking and measuring students' progress in all subjects. In addition, the dedication and expertise of the staff, the high quality teamwork, and the excellent ethos of the school are underlying strengths. As a result, students make very significant gains in their personal development and academic progress. There is consistent management of behaviour throughout the school, and the partnership that exists between the education and care ensures that students' health, safety and well-being are of paramount importance. As students settle into the school; they respond very positively to the routines and the high expectations of them. Students' behaviour during the inspection was excellent, and although there are times when they show anger or are difficult, they show respect for their surroundings, the adults who work with them, and to visitors. The trustees, guided by the chief executive and the

headteacher, are very visionary and aspire to very high expectations for the overall quality of the provision.

What the school does well:

- it monitors the students' progress constantly so that all their academic and care needs are met. As a result, students make excellent academic and personal progress;
- it helps students improve their self-esteem, develop excellent attitudes and behaviour and, through very positive relationships, celebrate each other's successes;
- it recruits highly qualified staff and provides frequent, up-to-date training so that teaching and learning, curriculum planning and assessment are excellent;
- it provides a wealth of support services so that students' additional emotional or medical needs are met;
- it ensures that there is highly effective teamwork between all adults. This is based on excellent communication and quick responses to situations which arise; and
- it provides a very wide range of extra-curricular activities, both in and out of school time. These contribute to the excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students.

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

The school complies with all the regulations.

Next Steps

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

- ensure that the organisation of work experience is more structured; and
- improve the indoor sports facilities and provide a room specifically for teaching science.

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. All subjects of the National Curriculum are provided and the school promotes the emotional, personal and social development of students very successfully. Some students have had numerous failed placements before attending Cotswold Chine School and the school places a strong emphasis on developing students' trust and emotional resilience by establishing stability and consistency. The building of trusting relationships between all staff and students is crucial and the school is very effective in achieving this. The twice-daily assembly system and hand-over routines between care and teaching staff play a valuable role in forging good relationships and in dealing with pastoral issues. A range of accreditation, including the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), is available to all students and is tailored to their specific needs and abilities.

The school offers a high degree of flexibility to meet individual needs. Each student has a set of individual lesson objectives which are clearly linked to individual education plans (IEPs). The content of each subject is carefully planned, with the relevant topics often backed-up by visits and practical activities that reinforce learning. For example, students use the grounds of the school and its surrounding environment for mathematics and science. There are excellent links between subjects, for example, citizenship was included in an English lesson which focussed on the work of the emergency services. Music, modern foreign languages and personal, social and health education (PSHE) are also incorporated into lessons.

The provision for PSHE is also outstanding. It is taught as a discrete subject on a weekly basis, but opportunities are also taken by the education staff to reinforce different aspects in the majority of other lessons and tutorials. For example, very good use is made of role play to reinforce students' personal safety. The programme covers effectively important and relevant issues concerning drugs, smoking, racism, relationships and sexual health. The development of students' self-reliance and opportunities for them to take responsibilities within the school setting are very good. Students are delegated responsibilities, such as collecting the registers, sorting and distributing the daily school mail, and showing visitors around the school.

Extra-curricular provision is outstanding. There is a full range of practical activities that challenge and extend students' experiences and reinforce the very good practice taking place in the classrooms. For example, older students will be taken to Normandy this summer to see at first hand the historical monuments of the Second World War to reinforce work on French and citizenship.

Preparation for independence is seen as a priority for all students, and the school's strategies and organisation for achieving this are outstanding. Students are

assessed on various levels of independence, such as being fully dependent on supervision by an adult to travelling independently using public transport. The liaison between the residential care homes and the school is outstanding and care staff support the work of the school and this liaison continues when students are in their home setting. The work-related opportunities offered to students are good. Within lessons there are good opportunities for students to discuss issues of work and skills for living in the adult world. The school has good links with the Connexions service which helps students plan for the future. Work experience opportunities are organised for older students, but those that are within the school's own provision are organised relatively informally at present.

The quality of teaching and assessment

Overall the quality of teaching and learning are outstanding. Students soon realise that, after many years of feeling a failure, they can achieve success. There are many examples of students who, on entry to the school, were attaining the low levels of the National Curriculum and after four years attain GCSE. This success happens because all teachers know and understand the students very well in terms of what they can achieve and what they find difficult. They are very aware of the different ways in which each student learns and makes the most progress. This is evident in the lesson planning where each student's expected achievement is set for every lesson, and includes extension work which takes the higher attaining students one step further. All teachers share the targets with students at the beginning of, and throughout, the lesson. These are displayed at the front of the class, and in some lessons, such as art, the students who have the greatest difficulty remembering their targets have these written out on personal cards. Adults working with each student use these cards to record their achievements or difficulties. This provides an immediate record for both the teacher and the student. Lessons are very well timed, with a variety of activities, and always include some elements of literacy. This is especially beneficial as many of the students have literacy difficulties. The regular use of ICT as a teaching method makes a significant and positive impact on students' learning and progress.

Teachers have been recruited who have high levels of subject expertise and an interest in supporting and teaching students with difficulties. They use a consistent approach to the management of potentially disruptive behaviour. This is achieved in a quiet and non-confrontational way so that the rest of the students continue with their learning undisturbed. The staffing of each class with two qualified teachers benefits the students greatly, both in their learning and their behaviour. It also ensures that in each lesson there is a high level of educational expertise, and while one teacher leads the lesson the other focuses on those who need extra support or to be extended further. This arrangement provides teachers with excellent opportunities to observe and learn from each other's specialist knowledge and expertise, and to share observations about student's personal development and progress. Consequently, students are taught by teachers who have a consistent approach to planning, behaviour management and assessment.

The school has excellent assessment systems in place. This starts with the assessment week where all aspects of the student's development and behaviour are

observed and evaluated. It is only after this assessment that a place at the school is offered. The school has created and developed a unique system using an ICT database whereby staff enter the achievement and/or the assessment of each student at the end of each lesson or unit of study. This links very effectively with the curriculum planning, which is also held on the system. The records show each student's attainment against the nationally accepted performance levels (P levels) or the National Curriculum levels for all subjects, and also across different aspects of subjects. For example, information can be obtained to show how well a student is doing in reading and teachers can compare this with the progress made in writing. It provides excellent information on how well each student is doing; it also provides the school with the means to see how well a student has progressed since they started at the school. Development is still taking place and it is intended to eventually provide detailed analysis of a student's progress in personal development.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The provision for student's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Opportunities for spiritual reflection, both for individual students and in class and whole-school gatherings, are very good. The tutorial system includes opportunities for quiet reflection in class groups. Cultural awareness and development are also very good. Students are encouraged to appreciate cultural diversity and respect the values and beliefs of others. This is achieved through a thoughtfully planned programme of religious education, PSHE and citizenship. Opportunities are provided for students to experience aspects of different cultures, for example, by looking at national celebrations of other religions, ethnic groups and nationalities. For example, conversational German lessons are supported in food technology lessons when German food is prepared and enjoyed. Art and music are also used effectively to explore elements of different cultures. Students' moral development is also outstanding. Staff are very good role models and implement a strong moral code. There are high expectations that students will learn from it. They are taught right from wrong and the consequences of their actions are discussed with them.

The provision for students' social development is outstanding. Many students have histories of high mobility, moving regularly from one placement to another over a short space of time. Following their admission, the school goes to great lengths to assess the students' social needs and ensure that they are placed in suitable group settings in the school and in the residences. Students are encouraged to participate in decision making. They do this through their students' representative meetings, which have an agenda reflecting the needs and interests of the students, for example discussion of school uniform, setting up a school newspaper and raising money for charities. Mealtimes, which take place in each of the residential houses, are a real family affair, and are used very effectively for reflection, social development and interaction. Students are extremely aware of the need to eat a healthy diet, as only organic and fresh food is used. The policy of the school to

exclude televisions from the homes and school, is based on the desire of staff for students to fully interact with adults and each other. This is a significant factor in the progress students make in speaking and listening and in their abilities to converse maturely with staff and visitors. The range of outdoor pursuit activities and sports options provide excellent opportunities for the promotion of students' social development and a healthy lifestyle.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the students

The school makes excellent provision for the welfare, health and safety of students. Of worthy note is the emphasis the school places on the well-being of all its students. Examples of this include the use of organic and, wherever possible, fresh food, and the excellent provision of additional support services and therapies from specialist personnel. Consequently, students have immediate and constant support to meet their additional needs.

The importance of students' welfare, health and safety, both within and outside school, is given high priority. There is an extensive range of policies and procedures which address all aspects and meet statutory requirements. There are comprehensive monitoring procedures for any incidents that require sanctions, including physical intervention. Detailed behaviour and anti-bullying policies outline the school's ethos and approach. All the different sites of the school are safe places to work and learn. This is because the school uses a range of consultants or professionals to carry out very regular spot checks. The policies and practices are reviewed regularly by safety professionals, such as the local fire officer, and regular evacuations take place. When visits out of school are undertaken, detailed risk assessments on the students and the places to be visited form part of a comprehensive checking system.

Staff, who are very well deployed to ensure student safety, have a clear understanding of school policies, particularly those policies which relate to child protection. An admission register and attendance registers for each class are kept and are part of an impressive ICT system. The school is conscious of its responsibilities to provide access to the school and to the curriculum for students who have additional disabilities. This includes an audit of, and a developmental plan, for accessibility.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school takes all possible steps to be sure of the suitability of all staff before confirming appointments. All staff identities, qualifications and health records are verified and enhanced Criminal Records Bureau certification is obtained.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The overall quality of the accommodation is good and some outstanding developments and improvements are currently taking place. There are long-term plans to improve further the amount of educational accommodation. However, the most needed of these is the provision of a larger and more appropriate facility for physical education than that currently available in the school's hall. The school makes very good use of sports facilities outside school to compensate for this. There is no room for specifically teaching science to further support students' learning, especially in their examination work in this subject.

All classrooms are in a good state of repair, and are appropriate in size for the activities which take place in them. All buildings are in good repair; they are safe, hygienic, and well lit, heated and ventilated. Fittings and furnishings are appropriate to the students and the flooring is of good quality and repair.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

There is an excellent range of information for students, parents, carers and placing authorities. The prospectus, known as the Statement of Purpose, covers all aspects of the education and care provision and is a very informative document. It is supplemented by a very wide range of policies. This is supplemented by a simpler version for students that helps them to understand the rules and routines of the school and the residential houses. The school has a clear admission policy which, after referral by the LA, includes a comprehensive assessment week for each student when their difficulties are evaluated before they are offered a place.

The amount and regularity of information made available to parents, carers and LAs on each student's academic and personal achievements and progress is outstanding. Information on the different areas of the curriculum that the student has covered, the progress made and the level attained is compiled each month and is sent to all interested parties. The school holds regular review meetings including statutory annual reviews. All supporting parties and professionals involved are invited to attend and contribute. Students contribute some information for these reports and are encouraged to take a lead role in their reviews.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school has a very detailed and comprehensive complaints procedure that is clearly outlined in an informative policy. It has clear time-scales for the informal and formal stages of a complaint and also has an appeal stage by a panel that includes an independent representative. The complaints procedure links well to those required to meet the care standards.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

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| Name of school: | Cotswold Chine School | | |
| DfES Number: | 916/6040 | | |
| Type of school: | Special school (Rudolf Steiner) | | |
| Status: | Independent | | |
| Age range of students: | 9 - 18 years | | |
| Gender of students: | Mixed | | |
| Number on roll (full-time students): | Boys: 27 | Girls: 9 | Total: 36 |
| Number of boarders: | Boys: 27 | Girls: 9 | Total: 36 |
| Number of students with a statement of special educational need: | Boys: 27 | Girls: 9 | Total: 36 |
| Annual fees (boarders): | £105,137 - £177,684 | | |
| Address of school: | Box Nr Stroud Gloucestershire GL6 9AG | | |
| Telephone number: | 01453 837550 | | |
| Fax number: | 01453 837555 | | |
| Email address: | mail@cotswold-chine.org.uk | | |
| Headteacher: | Mr A Phipps | | |
| Proprietor: | The Trustees of Costwold Chine | | |
| Reporting Inspector: | Mrs F Gander | | |
| Date of inspection: | 26 - 29 June 2006 | | |

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