

Inspection report

Eastwood Grange School

Independent special school

DfES ref no: 830/6013

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 19 - 22 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

Eastwood Grange School is an independent, residential, special school and children's home situated in Ashover, near Chesterfield in Derbyshire. It accepts boys between the ages of 11 and 17 who have severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. It belongs to the Priory group of schools. At present there are 28 boys on roll, one of whom is above compulsory school age. All except one have statements of special educational need. Admission is by discussion with local authority social service and education departments. The school does not accept emergency admissions. There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school sees its primary function *'as the management of change through a positive residential experience'* and its aim is *'to reverse the downward spiral of failure ... and replace it with optimism and success through finely graded, achievable goals'*.

Summary of main findings

Eastwood Grange School is a good school with many strengths in important areas of its work. The curriculum is broad and balanced and the quality of teaching is good. The school provides a very effectively structured environment in which the boys thrive and develop high levels of self-esteem. A very wide range of extra-curricular activities is provided by the care staff after school hours. Assessment procedures are very good. The school keeps very detailed records of the students' progress in both education and behaviour. It places great emphasis on good manners and as a result the boys are normally courteous and well-mannered.

What the school does well:

- it provides a structured environment with clear boundaries;
- it builds very good relationships between staff and students with high levels of trust and respect;
- it provides excellent levels of care in its houses and in the school;
- it provides good quality teaching in which lessons are planned carefully and in which teachers know their students well and have high expectations of them;
- its assessment procedures for the students' education and behaviour are very good; and

- its facilities both in the school and the houses are very good.

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

The school meets all the statutory requirements.

Next Steps

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

- further extend the curriculum to meet the needs of all students, for example by providing more vocational courses;
- develop technology courses so that students' skills are developed systematically;
- develop a common approach to literacy and homework both in the school and the home; and
- extend assessment procedures still further to analyse test data in order to identify strengths and weaknesses both in the curriculum and for individual students.

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 good. It is broad and balanced and reflects the school's aim of being a *'centre of excellence for education'*. The school focuses on providing good learning opportunities to motivate students and to engage in their education. It also focuses on equipping students with the necessary life skills for adulthood, which include literacy and numeracy, and it ensures that students leave school with external accreditation to celebrate their achievements.

The National Curriculum is followed in all subjects, and the students receive full-time education. The majority of subjects are very well planned, with written policies which endorse the high expectations of the school. However, continuity and progression in students' learning are not yet apparent in all curriculum areas, for example in design and technology. Many of the long term plans have been reviewed and action plans drawn up in order to re-develop curriculum areas taking advantage of new courses for the 14 - 19 age group. Current schemes of work are at the appropriate level for the ages of the students. They are adapted by teachers to meet the different needs of the learners, as specified in their statements and identified in their individual education plans.

Spanish, French and German are taught at a basic level to the younger students, using imaginative resources to make the languages relevant. Overall, the provision for music is scant. A small number of themed music days are provided over the year. Information and communication technology (ICT) provides good cross-curricular links with music in Year 10. Programmes for citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE) are taught throughout the school and these support the school's vision of providing the opportunity for a *'new beginning'* by helping students to *'face up to the realities of life and the consequences of their actions'*. The approach to literacy is not yet fully shared with the care staff and consequently there is no whole school approach to reading.

Students in Year 9 take national tests. At Key Stage 4 they are entered for six General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects. Accreditation is offered in art, food technology, resistant materials and religious education (RE). Some other subjects are offered at Entry Level for the lower attaining students. Other accreditation opportunities are also being explored. Currently there is no accreditation route for ICT. Students in Year 10 also benefit from working towards the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award. Applied and vocational and basic skills courses are offered at the local college, where the student who is above compulsory school age is studying a City and Guilds Level I course. Students attending college are supported carefully by school staff in developing the life skills necessary for them to manage their independence. The school compiles a portfolio for each student to celebrate his success. The range of accreditation options offered by the school allows students of all abilities to leave having achieved well. This is in sharp contrast to some of their earlier experiences.

Extra-curricular activities provide a wealth of enrichment opportunities and enable students to pursue and develop new interests, such as fishing or ten-pin bowling. Work experience is very carefully managed and is offered to those students who will be able to benefit from it.

The students are well supported by the Connexions service, which provides carefully tailored careers advice, support and guidance specific to the needs of the students. Regular visits by the Connexion adviser ensure an on-going relationship with students.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is good overall and some very good teaching was observed. The best teaching is characterised by detailed planning, high expectations and carefully focused activities. These lessons are lively, challenging and successfully engage the interest of the students who have short concentration spans. Consequently the students make valuable contributions to the lessons. The satisfactory lessons are less well structured and as a result the pace is slower. In some, students' skills are not being developed systematically, which inhibits their progress.

The quality of planning in most lessons is thorough and is linked very effectively to the medium-term planning. All lessons have clear objectives and activities are planned carefully to meet these aims. In the best lessons the activities are differentiated effectively so that students are set targets and challenged at the appropriate level. Teachers' expectations are generally high and they have a detailed knowledge of the needs of all the students. However, in a few lessons the work does not match the students' individual needs and they lose interest, become disruptive and do not work at a satisfactory pace.

The teachers know their students very well and relationships are warm and friendly. They gently encourage the boys to complete their work and behave properly. They have effective strategies for dealing with potentially difficult situations. The teachers are usually supported by a care assistant and can summon extra help if required. All staff have had appropriate training in restraint which ensures a consistency in approach. They expect good behaviour and most students respond appropriately for most of the time. In discussion with the boys, teachers carry out risk assessments for classroom situations that could be dangerous. The boys are fully aware of their limits and know and understand why they are not allowed to do certain things.

Resources are very good and are used effectively to support lessons. There is a good resource centre that includes a computer suite and a small library. The boys are taught computer skills, such as importing pictures into text, using the internet and presentation of work, very successfully. They use these effectively when researching for their topics. In addition they are encouraged to use the library and not to rely solely on the internet.

Assessment procedures are very good. Students are given a series of baseline tests when they are admitted to the school. They are then tested regularly at the end of each unit of work and their progress is monitored and tracked. In mathematics new

trial procedures are enabling the students to be involved in their own assessments. They take the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 and are entered for six subjects in the GCSE at the end of Key Stage 4. The school is now planning to analyse still further the information gained from these tests in order to identify strengths and weaknesses within the curriculum. Homework is set, but not on a regular basis, and it is not always completed. The school and care staff do not always employ effective strategies to ensure that the boys develop a work ethic towards their homework. The quality of marking is good and includes encouraging and helpful comments.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The school focuses on promoting moral awareness and on the improvement of social skills, as these are identified as priority areas to be developed with the students. Staff work hard to raise the self-esteem and confidence of the students. They plan work which is achievable, and try to ensure that each student has the opportunity to experience success. Staff know the students extremely well, and enjoy very positive relationships with them. The ethos is one of mutual respect. Incidents are dealt with calmly and effectively. Staff provide very good role models and apply the same rules consistently, so that students are aware of what is right and what constitutes good behaviour. Students' behaviour was observed to be very good, both in class and around the school. Students are polite and helpful to visitors.

The house system provides a 'family' setting in which opportunities for students to take responsibility are developed carefully for each individual. A week under canvas in the Lake District, coupled with a variety of outdoor pursuits, helps students to develop their self-esteem and their ability to work in teams. Extra-curricular activities, planned by students and staff in each house, involve frequent trips into the community. This enables students to develop their social skills and become more confident in out-of-school settings. The students interviewed say their favourite activity is rock scrambling, though football is a close second.

Meals are viewed as social occasions, when staff and students talk together in a pleasant and relaxed manner. Breakfast, tea and supper are provided in the houses by the care staff. Lunch is served for the whole school in the main dining room, which provides an opportunity for informal conversation with the teaching staff. Students' table manners are very pleasing, and they say the food is very good.

Students' cultural awareness is developed in a number of curriculum areas, for example in art and geography. The spiritual development of students is addressed through the RE programme in Years 7, 8 and 9, which allows the exploration of other cultures and religious festivals. The daily whole-school assembly, which starts with a school prayer, provides time for reflection. Activities at Christmas, such as the nativity play and a carol service, offer further opportunities for reflection. Students

are encouraged to consider the wider community, and they support a number of local events and charities. The student council is an active student voice, and is instrumental in setting the sum charged for the fund-raising non-uniform days. Some students also participated in the appointment of the headteacher.

Structured citizenship and PSHE programmes provide students with a good knowledge of the main public institutions and services in England. Visits to the local magistrates' courts and other public services reinforce the students' knowledge and understanding.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the students

The school and children's home both make very good provision for students' welfare, health and safety. All the required policies are in place and have been checked against the appropriate Department for Education and Skills (DfES) requirements. Staff know and understand these policies and they are implemented very effectively throughout the school. There is a very cleverly thought out system of rewards (credits) that is carefully designed to encourage good behaviour. Clearly defined sanctions discourage unacceptable actions and words. Students are fully aware of the rewards and what they can earn as well as the impact of any sanctions imposed on their earning power. Teachers are always very careful to explain why they give or do not give credits. The school keeps very detailed individual records of students' behaviour and continually makes careful, high quality, individual risk assessments on the boys' behaviour in all aspects of their lives. This highly structured but very caring ethos has a positive impact on the boys' lives and while at the school they make significant progress in managing their own behaviour. Despite all the school's efforts to make a good home for the students, some still abscond. Some of this unauthorised absence is parentally condoned. The school procedures to deal with this are good. Students report that there is some bullying but that it is quickly dealt with by staff.

Staff are very alert to issues of abuse. The principal is the child protection officer and the head of care deals with any allegations of abuse. All staff have been trained in child protection procedures and the school has clear procedures in place for restraint and serious incidents. Students are very closely supervised at all times both in the school and in the home.

Fire safety is good. The school has fulfilled all the recommendations made by the fire officer and is now awaiting a further visit for confirmation. This when received will be forwarded to the DfES. Many fire drills are recorded in the fire log book but most of these have taken place out of school hours, but rarely at other times of the day. Four members of staff have undertaken full First Aid training whilst the majority of other staff have attended the one day training. Most staff have been trained to administer medicines. Students who are ill are looked after in their house by one of their carers. The school fully meets the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools.

The admission and attendance registers are completed as required. The school has produced an appropriate statement with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002. There is a sound three-year action plan in place that states the school's intentions to improve its existing facilities.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has very good procedures to check, through the appropriate channels, the suitability of all education, care and administrative staff that come into contact with the students. Its procedures are thorough and include professional, personal and medical checks. The National Minimum Standards for the appointment of care staff are met in full. Appointments are not confirmed until these checks have been completed. These procedures are a model of good practice.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The premises, which are situated on a fourteen-acre site, are very good. A large Victorian building provides residential accommodation for two of the school's houses on the upper floors, with the school dining room, kitchens and administrative offices located on the ground floor. The third house is situated in newly completed accommodation, which joins the main building to form the shape of a horse-shoe with a central courtyard.

All three houses have comfortable lounge and kitchen areas. In the older building the kitchens in both houses are being replaced. Students eat most of their meals in their houses. Some prepare their own food in the house kitchens. All three houses provide homely accommodation, and each is distinct. Students have individual bedrooms, some of which have en-suite facilities. They have been able to personalise their own newly decorated rooms by helping to choose the colour scheme, curtains and carpet.

The new buildings have been planned carefully to provide generous specialist accommodation for science, art, technology and a learning resource centre. The science laboratory has an adjoining prep room where chemicals and equipment are properly stored. In addition, the new block offers two well-appointed teaching rooms, a staff room and a small room for individual support sessions, where additional resources for those with learning difficulties and disabilities are stored.

The premises are maintained to a high standard and the rooms are bright, well decorated and comfortably furnished. A temporary classroom provides pleasant additional teaching areas. The number of toilets and washrooms are sufficient, and

there is a designated First Aid post. The minimum standards for residential special schools are fully met.

The school is well resourced, and four classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards. Interesting displays reflect students' work and the curriculum. Classrooms are sufficient in size to accommodate the current number of students in each group, taking into account the students' special educational needs. The school also benefits from a Sports Barn, which provides a large indoor area for physical education. Local facilities provide additional opportunities for sport, and a variety of games and activities are undertaken in the extensive school grounds.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

The school provides a full range of information for parents and carers. The 'Statement of Purpose', together with the residents' handbook, is informative and provides all the required details. The school has gone to great lengths to reassure parents of the high level of care that their children can expect to be given both in the school and in the children's home. The 'Statement of Purpose' explains clearly such aspects as the school's aims, the admission criteria as well as its arrangements for the promotion of education. The residents' handbook informs both parents and students about general provision, for example the people involved in their care, health and safety matters and the complaints procedures. It also includes the daily routines of residential care, and the entitlements and expectations that students can expect from their education.

Parents and/or carers receive very informative progress reports every six months. These reports include an educational report, a care report and a vocational report. They are sent out before the regular review meetings, when students' progress in their education and behaviour management are discussed and targets are set.

The majority of parents or carers who returned the questionnaires sent out before the inspection took place felt that their children were helped to settle well when they started at the school and that they were making good progress. However, a few felt that they were not kept well enough informed about their children's progress and that their children did not like the school. This is in contrast to the majority of boys who, in their questionnaires, stated that they were pleased to be at the school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school's 'Complaints Policy and Procedures' meets all requirements, including

those for boarding and residential special schools. It is readily available for parents, carers, students and placing authorities.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Eastwood Grange School
DfES Number:	830/6013
Type of school:	Residential Special School and Children's Home
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16+ years
Gender of pupils:	Boys
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	28
Number of boarders:	28
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	27
Annual fees (boarders):	£107,444 (basic fee)
Address of school:	Milken Lane Ashover Nr Chesterfield Derbyshire S45 0BA
Telephone number:	01246 590255
Fax number:	01246 590215
Email address:	eastwoodgrange@priorygroup.com
Headteacher:	Mr S Magson
Proprietor:	Priory Education Services Limited
Reporting Inspector:	Mr D C Houghton
Date of inspection:	19 - 22 June 2006

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