

Inspection report

Coxlease School

Independent special school

DfES ref no: 850/6017

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 3 - 6 July 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

Coxlease School is an independent residential special school in the New Forest, in Hampshire, that provides placements for up to 55 boys aged between 9 and 17 years who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Many have additional and/or specific learning difficulties including autistic spectrum disorder; school phobia and dyslexia. The school offers term time and full-time placements. All pupils have histories of educational failure prior to admission.

Its mission statement is *'putting young people first'* and its aims and objectives are *'to provide education, care, therapy, welfare, support and related services of the highest standard to allow pupils to achieve their full potential. This will also facilitate full inclusion into society and prepare our pupils for integration into the wider community as contributory adults.'*

The boarding accommodation was last inspected in January 2006 by the Commission for Social Care Inspection and was found to have no issues to address. In addition to the main campus, there are three other sites used by older pupils and post-16 boarders.

Summary of main findings

Coxlease School is an excellent school and provides very well for the pupils' needs. It has many strengths in the quality of its education. The curriculum is excellent and the teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Staff, including care staff, have very good relationships with pupils and hold high expectations for their work and behaviour. Pupils' welfare, achievement and personal development are at the heart of the school's philosophy. The principal and Heads of Education and Care provide outstanding leadership in their respective roles. Other managers discharge their responsibilities very effectively to ensure the pupils' well-being.

What the school does well:

- it provides very relevant experiences in and out of the classroom to meet the pupils' academic, emotional and behavioural needs;
- it encourages the pupils to stay safe and healthy and to achieve well, and it promotes their economic well-being in readiness for when they leave school;
- it provides well for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, which has a positive impact on their personal development;

- it places a strong emphasis on meeting pupils' individual needs by a flexible curriculum which includes access to therapists;
- it works successfully as a multi-professional team; and
- it provides effectively for its boarders.

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:

- create educational targets that are more easily measurable and relate to pupils' academic achievement;
- provide increased opportunities for more independent learning during the school day; and
- develop a shared understanding of 'homework' between education and care staff to make best use of pupils' efforts outside school hours.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The school provides an excellent curriculum which is effectively managed by subject co-ordinators and is securely supported by appropriate documentation and reference to national guidance.

The school offers all the subjects of the National Curriculum, including personal, social and health education (PSHE), citizenship, careers education, religious education (RE) and also vocational education. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) courses appropriate to their needs.

The pupils achieve well in relation to their abilities in standard attainment tests. They undertake Entry Level courses in English, mathematics, food technology and in design and technology (DT) (resistant materials). GCSE courses are followed in English, mathematics, science, DT, art, catering, drama, physical education, CLAIT/ICT (computer literacy and information technology and information and communication technology) and humanities. The grades achieved range from C to G. Some pupils gain the silver award in ASDAN courses. At local colleges of further education, Key Stage 4 pupils gain college accreditation in sport and leisure, food technology, brickwork, carpentry and painting and decorating.

The curriculum coverage is carefully monitored to ensure that all pupils receive an appropriate balance of subjects for their needs. Lessons are well planned and are reviewed on a regular basis as to their effectiveness. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection, as is the curriculum at Key Stage 2. The education of all pupils has suitably high status alongside the care and support they require given their emotional and behavioural needs.

Literacy and numeracy are promoted successfully in other subjects. A particularly good example is DT, where key technical vocabulary is attractively represented, helping the pupils to understand terms such as annealing and burnishing. The use of ICT is increasingly common in other subjects.

The curriculum content of ASDAN, PSHE and citizenship courses has a strong emphasis on guidance and knowledge of the world within and beyond school and prepares pupils well as they mature. The pupils' safety and health are promoted very effectively, as is their future economic well-being. The pupils are closely supported as they prepare to care and move on to increasingly independent settings, including colleges of further education. Vocational programmes and practical activities, such as art, design and food technology, work experience, college courses and outdoor pursuits are very rigorously planned with a good emphasis on first-hand experience with well-qualified specialists. Pupils are supported effectively in making choices by much improved links with Connexions careers staff. Work experience and college links are also promoted as appropriate and there is evidence that these

placements are effective despite the difficulties experienced by pupils. Key Stage 4 pupils enjoy part-time placements at up to five local colleges of further education.

The curriculum has many enriching features within and beyond the school day. An excellent example of curriculum enrichment during the school day was the 'Out of Joint Animation Project', a creative workshop where Key Stage 3 pupils worked with a professional animator to create vivid presentations using high technology. The wide range of activities offered by care staff enable the pupils who board to develop their personal and physical skills on site as well as at a wealth of off-site facilities.

The curriculum is highly relevant to meeting the pupils' prime special educational needs in relation to their behaviour and attitudes to learning. Daily tutorials build upon opportunities provided in lessons to enable the pupils to reflect upon how well they have achieved their behavioural targets. Flexibility is a key feature of the curriculum and highly personalised programmes are common where pupils have additional needs. Where it is deemed appropriate, pupils have additional therapy support to assist them in managing their behaviour. Therapists communicate their assessments as appropriate to teaching staff and provide written reports which reflect the high quality of multi-professional teamwork.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and learning in lessons is good and in some cases it is outstanding. The best teaching is well structured, challenging and gives pupils the opportunity to play an active role in their learning. However, in some lessons pupils do not always have the opportunity to experience independent learning. Good use is made of practical resources which are appropriate for every pupil and enable them to achieve well.

Since the time of the last inspection the school leadership team has introduced rigorous procedures for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. Subject coordinators are responsible for evaluating the work of their departments. This has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.

There are detailed schemes of work for all subjects and plans for lessons highlight the learning activities for each pupil. Intended learning outcomes are almost always shared with pupils at the beginning of lessons but in some cases they are not described in ways the pupils can easily understand. The classrooms are well-organised and appropriately stimulating learning environments. There are several examples of good use being made of ICT to support pupils' learning, for instance in DT and in a mathematics lesson where pupils were observed using ICT to plot and interpret coordinates on a grid.

The staff form a close team who support pupils and each other well. They have consistent expectations and reward pupils' good achievement and behaviour with meaningful praise. This helps pupils to improve their behaviour and develop their self-esteem. Staff treat pupils with respect at all times, even when they are particularly challenging. Their patient and calm approach helps pupils to make steady progress in lessons. Homework is offered to all pupils but at present there

are no clear procedures or expectations for its completion. Furthermore, there are many activities after school that are recorded in achievement folders for each house. This information is not routinely shared with school and represents a missed opportunity for monitoring pupils' progress and preferred learning styles.

There is a clear assessment policy. Pupils' work is assessed regularly using a variety of strategies across the curriculum and this information is collated to demonstrate good progress over time. All pupils have individual education plans but these do not always include targets which focus on academic achievement in addition to social and behavioural targets, for instance in literacy and numeracy. Many of these individual targets are not easily measurable and as a result it is hard to assess what is actually required and the progress being made to achieve them. During lessons there is ongoing assessment of pupils and immediate positive feedback is given to them. All lessons end with the opportunity for pupils to review their performance and reflect on their behaviour.

The quality of the additional therapies and support provided to pupils is excellent and they make a very good contribution to teaching and the curriculum. Following an initial assessment, pupils with additional learning needs are provided with individual support programmes which enable them to make good progress in their learning.

Staff have a very good knowledge of the subjects they teach and the school is very effective in the way that it utilises the skills of all members of staff.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral and social education is good. The school focuses strongly on developing pupils' moral awareness and appropriate social skills. Both care and education staff work hard to raise pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence. They plan work try to ensure that all pupils experience success which is praised and acknowledged. Incidents are dealt with calmly and effectively and in a manner that encourages pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour.

Staff provide very good role models for pupils and apply the same rules and expectations consistently so that pupils are aware of what is right and what constitutes good behaviour. Commenting on how the school helps pupils manage their own behaviour one pupil said: *'I used to have four issues a day at my other school now I hardly have any, staff here understand my problems'*. Some pupils occasionally display challenging behaviour, which results in an appropriate response from staff. Overall, the pupils' behaviour is good around the school and in lessons.

The development of pupils' cultural awareness is good and is addressed through several areas of the curriculum, for example in art pupils worked collaboratively on building North American Indian totem poles. The pupils' spiritual development is addressed through the RE curriculum, which provides the opportunity for pupils to

develop their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other major world religions as well as wider moral and social issues.

There are good opportunities for pupils to become involved with the local community. For instance, recently pupils raised funds for a local hospice by organising a sponsored swim. Older pupils take part in successful work experience placements within the community. The school council is an active group that provides a voice for pupils. Council members take their responsibilities very seriously.

There is broad and balanced PSHE and citizenship curriculum which provides pupils with a good understanding of several public institutions such as government and the law and public services such as health, the Samaritans and Childline. Off-site visits and professional workshops in school, such as '*Prison Me? No way!*' reinforce pupils' understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

This is a very caring environment. Staff work hard and support each other very well as they seek, with success, to promote pupils' health and welfare. They develop strong relationships with pupils and form a happy and enthusiastic team. Their positive attitudes increase pupils' enjoyment and confidence. The ratio of staff to pupils is very good and ensures the safety of both staff and pupils during incidents of challenging behaviour. The school has achieved 'Healthy School' status and there is a strong emphasis on encouraging pupils to develop healthy lifestyles.

There is a very good system of meetings to ensure that staff are aware of all issues relating to pupils' care, welfare and education. Communication between education and care staff is very effective, as seen at the twice daily 'handover' meetings.

Comprehensive policies have been established to guide practice in health and safety aspects and ensure consistency. Risk assessments for all activities are thorough and of high quality. Fire risk assessments and the monitoring of fire precautions are in accordance with requirements.

The arrangements for ensuring the safety and welfare of the pupils are a strength of the school. It has adopted very effective, safe, recruitment procedures. The designated child protection officer ensures that all staff have received training in child protection procedures and this is regularly updated. All staff appointed have followed a common induction procedure which covers the main policies and expectations in education and the home. All staff receive physical intervention training as part of their induction.

There is a very effective behaviour policy which provides useful guidance for staff and stresses the importance of the staff role in encouraging pupils to adopt appropriate, socially acceptable behaviour. Each pupil has an individual behaviour support plan which gives very good information about the pupil and what action to

take when behaviour is particularly challenging. Pupils are involved in the development of these plans and have a clear understanding of behaviour management procedures. Where the use of physical restraint is necessary the correct procedures are strictly and calmly adhered to by staff. All instances of restraint are carefully monitored, reviewed and followed up with counselling to address the issues involved.

The Police Involvement Panel is an excellent process that brings together education and care staff to identify contributory factors to incidents and whether there is a need to involve the police. As a result of this '*What can we learn?*' approach, practice is better informed and the likelihood of similar incidents is reduced.

Comprehensive and effective systems are in place for recording incidents and accidents. These are regularly reviewed. Appropriate admission and attendance records are kept.

The school's boarding accommodation meets, and in some cases exceeds, the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools. Boarding provision is based on single-room accommodation with good areas for recreation.

An audit of disability access has been carried out and has been translated into a three-year plan of proposed development to improve access for all.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The proprietor has very secure procedures for checking the identity, fitness, qualifications and employment history of school and care staff before they take up their appointment. Character references and professional references are also sought. Staff are informed that confirmation of appointment depends on gaining enhanced clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau. Relevant documents and copies of evidence used for staff selection are stored securely in staff files.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

Coxlease School is well maintained and suitable for its purpose. The school accommodation, apart from the excellent addition of the impressive sports hall, has remained largely the same since the last inspection. Overall, the quality of the teaching accommodation is satisfactory. The curriculum is well supported by specialist facilities for science, ICT, food and design technology, art and swimming.

Classrooms are adequately sized for the small teaching groups. Outdoor play areas, which include a small football pitch and a hard surface playing area, are good. The

library in the main house is increasingly being seen as a learning resource, although it is not yet fully used to develop the pupils' abilities to learn independently where appropriate.

Therapists and other visiting professionals have rooms dedicated for their use and this aids their overall effectiveness. The boarding accommodation is furnished well and the pupils enjoy good levels of privacy in their own rooms. A regular maintenance programme, including the instant repair of any damage, has a positive effect upon the pupils' regard for their school. The proprietor has appropriate plans, which are at an advanced stage, to improve the teaching accommodation.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

The quality of information for parents, carers and local authorities is good. Responses from parents and carers to the pre-inspection questionnaire were positive about all aspects of the school's work, including satisfaction with the information they receive. Their only concern is about homework; half the respondents said that they were not clear about its role. Their views, otherwise, are overwhelmingly positive. One wrote to inspectors about the effect school was having upon her son: *'In 18 months since he has been there, I cannot believe the change in him. I am so proud of what he has achieved and I'm very grateful to the school for all their hard work.'*

The recently reviewed prospectus is attractive, easy to read and contains useful information about the school's work. The proprietor has rightly identified the usefulness of providing all the information required by education and care inspectorates within one publication.

Parents and carers have regular opportunities, both formal and informal, to meet with teachers and other staff about their children's progress. They receive written reports, as well as reviews of statements of special educational needs, which provide good information about pupils' personal development. Information about their academic progress has recently improved and is now of good quality.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school has good procedures for handling complaints. The recently revised policy is available on request and will also be available for viewing on the school's website.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Coxlease School
DfES Number:	850/6017
Type of school:	Special residential school
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	9 - 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Boys
Number on roll:	52
Number of boarders:	48
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	50
Annual fees (day pupils):	£59,800 - £68,325
Annual fees (boarders):	£133,888 - £232,414
Address of school:	High Coxlease House Clay Hill Lyndhurst Hampshire SO43 7DE
Telephone number:	02380 283633
Fax number:	02380 282515
Email address:	mail@coxleaseschool.co.uk
Headteacher:	Mr Martin Rose
Proprietor:	Mr Steve Cliften
Reporting Inspector:	Mr Greg Sorrell
Date of inspection:	3 - 6 July 2006

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