

Inspection report

Maple Hayes Hall School

Independent special school

DfES ref no: 860/ 6022

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 22 - 25 May 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

Maple Hayes Hall School is an independent day special school situated in Lichfield, in Staffordshire. It provides education for pupils who have dyslexia and who are between the ages of 7 and 17 years. The school provides opportunities for pupils to engage in a unique, researched and established literacy curriculum, in which spelling is linked to concept formation using icons. This replaces the conventional rote-phonetic approach. Many pupils attend the school as a result of tribunal decisions, which have required the local authorities (LAs) to fund their education in this school. However, eight pupils who have statements are privately funded by parents.

There are 105 pupils, of which a small number are girls. All pupils have underachieved in their previous schools because of their specific literacy and sometimes numeracy difficulties. Some have become reluctant to attend education. All have average to above average ability, but most come to the school with low self-esteem and confidence. When they start at the school, pupils are predicted to be in the twenty per cent of school leavers who would not achieve any certification on leaving school. Two thirds of the pupils have statements of special educational needs. Many pupils travel from neighbouring counties to attend the school.

Summary of main findings

Maple Hayes Hall School is highly effective. Its curricular emphasis of addressing the literacy difficulties of pupils, its outstanding teaching and its expectations that all can succeed, enable pupils to gain a good range of external accreditation. The extensive and rigorous assessment and the expertise of staff are underlying strengths. As a result, pupils make significant progress in overcoming their specific learning difficulties, and this in turn enables them to make very good progress in other subjects and begin to enjoy learning. Behaviour is excellent and attitudes and relationships very positive throughout the school. The school is a safe and caring establishment, which pays good attention to pupils' health, safety and well-being.

What the school does well:

- it recruits staff with high levels of subject expertise who use the school's unique approach to literacy very effectively. Outstanding teaching helps pupils to overcome their barriers to learning;

- it promotes very positive relationships where pupils celebrate each other's successes. This improves pupils' self-esteem and their confidence in their own ability;
- it uses assessment consistently and purposefully throughout the school to identify the progress pupils are making in all subjects;
- the leadership team set high expectations throughout the school and have developed robust monitoring procedures;
- it makes sure that pupils are very safe, secure and that their well-being is of the utmost importance; and
- it ensures that pupils achieve extremely well and leave school with appropriate external accreditation so they can successfully move on to further training.

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 to do so, the school might wish to consider the following point for development:

- improve the provision of indoor facilities for physical activities.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is outstanding. The curriculum policy is well thought out and is supported effectively by detailed schemes of work. These are successful in enabling dyslexic pupils, who previously underachieved, to compete with their intellectual peers in the education system. All pupils are taught to read, spell, write and understand through the schools' own specialised literacy programme. The organisation and teaching of this aspect of the curriculum is very effective. Each class tutor is responsible for the literacy development of the pupils in the class. This is carried out in liaison with the educational psychologist and the headteacher, both of whom direct the literacy teaching throughout the school. Individual reading is strongly encouraged, as well as the systematic study of class literature. Books for all subjects are adapted and reproduced to a high quality in a style that promotes pupils' confidence in writing and presentation. They are the basis for success, not only in literacy and English, but also in other subjects.

For pupils at both key stages there is a broad and balanced curriculum, which, in line with the school's philosophy, is slightly modified by the omission of a modern foreign language (MFL). All other subjects of the National Curriculum are studied. There is no options system. All pupils take General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses, including three separate sciences. A few pupils who make the most rapid progress are entered for examinations a year early in Year 10.

Due to the success of the school's approach to literacy the pupils achieve very well. GCSE examination results are invariably better than the national average for similar specialist schools. In 2005, all Year 11 pupils achieved 5 GCSEs and 21% achieved 5 GCSEs graded between A* and C. There are particular strengths in all three science subjects, geography and in design and technology. Such results indicate outstanding progress by pupils overall.

The school pays good attention to the personal, social and health education and citizenship curriculum. Many aspects of the programme are taught in all subjects, and through the literacy, pastoral and careers provision. The latter is supported by the Connexions service which provides advice and support for further education and training after school. This is in conjunction with advice and support pupils gain from the services in their home areas. Through this integrated curriculum, pupils are very well aware of the dangers associated with drug and alcohol abuse. Citizenship is covered efficiently within subjects.

There is an extensive extra-curricular programme which includes a wide and diverse range of activities, such as cross-country running, horse riding and psychology club. The school actively encourages pupils to learn to play musical instruments, and tuition is arranged for brass, keyboard and guitar. Great emphasis is placed on visits to places connected to the curriculum, such as to local industry. Pupils have residential experiences at field and outward bound centres and are involved in a

Young Enterprise Programme where they experience running a company. As well as contributing to the breadth of the curriculum, these effectively develop pupils' self-confidence as well as enhance their economic awareness.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is good and in some lessons it is outstanding. This is because the staff who have been recruited have high levels of subject expertise, as well as an interest and ability to support and teach pupils using the school's own literacy programme. Consequently, pupils are taught by teachers with specialist subject knowledge who do not underestimate pupils' ability to achieve. They set challenging work that enables pupils to achieve a good range of GCSEs, especially in design and technology where information and communication technology (ICT) is used for teaching and learning and where the range of resources and equipment is very good.

All teachers know and understand the pupils very well, especially in terms of what they can achieve, what they find difficult and their different learning styles. This is evident in the planning, where the lesson objectives are clear, and what pupils are expected to know or understand by the end of the lesson is clearly linked to pupils' different abilities. Pupils soon realise that, after many years of feeling a failure, they can achieve success. Lessons are very well timed so that the pace is very fast. Pupils have no time to become restless or bored. In all but one class, the attitudes to learning observed were excellent. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to work independently, in groups, to compete with other and improve their own targets, such as the weekly literacy 'ICON' tests. Most teachers make good use of the end of lessons in order to see how much pupils have understood.

The school has an excellent assessment system in place. It uses its own assessment criteria for measuring and recording pupils' progress and effort, which are rigorously and consistently carried out by all teachers. To this is added the outcomes of testing in numeracy, literacy, spelling, writing and pupils' performance in weekly literacy tests. All progress is constantly monitored and pupils are fully aware of the progress they are making and how well they are doing.

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. There is a very strong and pleasant family atmosphere. Pupils, sometimes for the first time, enjoy coming to school and speak openly about the difference the school has made to their well-being. Relationships in the school between adults and pupils are excellent. They are encouraged to value each other's individuality and to help each other. Pupils clearly know right from wrong, and have a strong sense of fairness.

There is an underpinning Christian ethos in the school. It promotes learning and caring as paramount and a strong emphasis is also placed on pupils' social development. The extra-curricular experiences and clubs, attended by almost 90 % of pupils, are a testimony to their enjoyment and developing self-confidence. There is an active school forum and a sound prefect system that promote a mature sense of caring for the school community. These prepare pupils very well for the next stages of their academic, economic and personal lives. Pupils' spiritual awareness is good and is raised through assemblies and religious education (RE) lessons. There is a strong emphasis on supporting charities, such as the support for a hospital's Renal Unit and the Disaster Rescue Service. Pupils are encouraged to appreciate cultural diversity and to respect the beliefs and values of others. The school has an increasingly multi-ethnic population and there are good relationships and mutual respect between ethnic groups. The curriculum contains a good range of planned opportunities for the appreciation of other cultures, especially in humanities and art.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

All the staff at the school ensure that the pupils are very safe and well protected. Careful consideration has been given to the policies and practices so that the health and safety risks to pupils are minimised. All staff, especially form tutors, undertake their responsibilities in relation to pupils' welfare, health and safety thoroughly. This provision is backed up by a designated person for welfare. Particular attention is paid to the needs and welfare of the few girls in the school; they have a named person they can go to if need be. The school ensures that the pupils are provided with a well-cooked, healthy meal using fresh food at lunchtime, when they also have opportunities to develop social skills and responsibility. This contributes to the overall well-being of students.

Policies are comprehensive and include procedures for child protection, anti-bullying, behaviour, health and safety, fire safety, and educational visits. Fire safety precautions are carried out regularly and recorded systematically. Log books for incidents, sanctions, detentions and merits are well kept. Pupils are very clear about the consequences of breaking the school rules, for example if they bring mobile phones or music players into school. This usually results in confiscation; repeated incidents lead to a detention. Arrangements for the registration of admissions and attendance meet the requirements fully. Pupils are very well supervised at all times in the building and outside in the grounds. Exclusions are used, but only rarely and only for the most serious of offences where pupils put themselves or others at risk.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

Enhanced checks are made with the Criminal Records Bureau, references are taken up and employment history is investigated before anyone is offered employment in the school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The accommodation used for teaching has been improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. It provides reasonable sized rooms for the number of pupils in each class. Rooms are in a good state of repair; they are safe and hygienic and are well lit, heated and ventilated. Fittings and furnishings are appropriate to the ages and needs of the pupils and most of the flooring is of good quality and repair. There is a very good range of specialist rooms for teaching design and technology, art, science and especially information and communication technology. These are all resourced with up-to date equipment. A few ground floor rooms in the old hall are also used, such as for the teaching of music and for examinations. The quality and number of toilets are satisfactory. The hall and dining area provide enough room for all pupils to come together. While there are very good facilities and space for outside physical education, the use of the hall in the old building is inappropriate because of its size. To compensate for this the school makes good use of outside leisure facilities.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

There is a very informative prospectus which contains a clear statement of the school's ethos, its aim, and its unique way of addressing pupils' difficulties. It informs parents and all interested parties about its admission procedures, contact phone numbers, and important policies. This information is supported by the school's excellent admission procedures where parents and pupils are invited to school. During this visit, parents have the opportunity to see their children being taught and assessed. This is backed up by an informative presentation concerning the teaching methods which the school promotes, and in addition there is an excellent school web site.

Parents receive excellent information on how well their children are progressing. These take the form of termly reports on each subject. In addition to this, the school collects a vast range of assessment information which shows the pupils' progress over time, their attainment in National Curriculum levels, and information about pupils' behaviour, attitudes, attendance and any concerns and incidents.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school complaints policy is very detailed but is easy to understand. The complaints procedure includes clear time-scales for the informal and formal stages of a complaint and includes an appeal stage by a panel that includes an independent representative.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

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| Name of school: | Maple Hayes Hall School | | |
| DfES Number: | 860/ 6022 | | |
| Type of school: | Special Day School | | |
| Status: | Independent | | |
| Age range of pupils: | 7 - 17 years | | |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed | | |
| Number on roll (full-time pupils): | Boys: 93 | Girls: 12 | Total: 105 |
| Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need: | Boys: 56 | Girls: 6 | Total: 62 |
| Annual fees: | £11,070 - £14,985 | | |
| Address of school: | Maple Hayes Hall School Abnalls Lane Lichfield Staffs WS13 8BL | | |
| Telephone number: | 01543 264387 | | |
| Fax number: | 01543 262022 | | |
| Email address: | office@dyslexia.gb.com | | |
| Headteacher: | Dr D Brown | | |
| Proprietors: | Dr E N Brown and Mrs B M Brown | | |
| Reporting Inspector: | Mrs F Gander | | |
| Date of inspection: | 22 - 25 May 2006 | | |

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