

Inspection report

Denby Grange School
Independent special school

DfES ref no: 384/6129

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 11 - 14 September 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

Denby Grange School is a small independent school run by Keys Child Care Ltd, located in a rural setting near the village of Midgley near Wakefield. It admits pupils aged 11 -16 years with emotional and behavioural difficulties who need a structured and nurturing environment in order to develop their true potential. The school was registered with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in 2001 to provide education for up to 24 pupils. At the time of the inspection there were 20 pupils on roll: four 4 girls and 16 boys; 17 have a statement of special educational need (SEN). The pupils come from several different local authorities. Six live in the company's children's homes, while others live with their parents, carers or other care providers. The school aims to '*help pupils develop lively enquiring minds and the ability to question reason and acquire the knowledge and skills relevant to adult life*'.

The school had significant changes to its staffing structure at all levels at the start of the autumn term. The current headteacher had been in post for just three weeks at the time of the inspection.

Summary of main findings

Very recent improvements to the educational provision at Denby Grange are as a result of better planning and a clearer vision for its future development. The new headteacher has made a good start to shaping what goes on in the school and in raising staff morale. However, initiatives aimed at improving the school have not yet had time to impact and consequently the quality of the educational provision is unsatisfactory. The school is at an early stage in developing the broad and balanced curriculum to which it aspires and this has yet to be fully implemented. Although there are examples of good teaching, a significant proportion of lessons are unsatisfactory because the pupils' behaviour is not managed well. Teaching is inadequate overall. While a number of pupils progress well in subjects such as food technology, art and design and in information and communication technology (ICT), their achievements in other subjects are limited. There are few formal systems for assessing and recording pupils' progress in subjects and activities. The provision for pupils' social development is satisfactory but there are shortcomings in the provision for their moral, social and cultural development, despite clear strengths in the relationships between staff and pupils.

What the school does well:

- its new headteacher has brought stability to the school and staff morale is improving;

- its staff work hard, are committed to improving the school and provide good role models for pupils;
- it provides helpful information for prospective parents; and
- it has a clear complaints policy.

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

- develop and implement a curriculum that meets the needs of pupils and improve the quality of teaching and learning as detailed in section 1 of this report;
- improve the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, and cultural development and provide them with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England;
- attend to the regulations identified in section 3 of this report with regard to the welfare, health and safety of pupils and
- ensure that relevant financial information is made available to local authorities and other interested parties.

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

- devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

Although there is a suitable written policy that sets out clear aims for the future, the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Whilst pupils receive full-time education and cover most areas of the National Curriculum, the content of each subject until recent times has not been planned in a coherent and logical way.

Pupils' knowledge, understanding and experiences are not built on prior learning and the outcomes of assessment. There have been no schemes of work to help teachers plan their lessons. The result of this is that pupils have not made sufficient progress and have limited achievements, particularly in core subjects. Subjects that pupils obviously enjoy are those that are planned and taught well, and for which there is a reasonable range of resources. These include art and design, food technology and ICT. The school is beginning to develop the curriculum to address the chronic shortcomings.

Literacy and numeracy are well represented on the timetables, as is personal, social and health education and citizenship. Physical education (PE) takes place mainly at off-site venues, and is supported by the use of outside coaches. Some use is made of visits to local museums and places of interest such as the local Museum of Mining. The personal, social and health education curriculum includes a range of topics to promote pupils' personal development, but this range is also fairly new. The school has an arrangement with the Connexions service to help pupils make career choices about future college placements and take advantage of work experience placements. However, courses studied by older pupils in Years 10 and 11 have not led to external accreditation and therefore pupils have been disadvantaged when moving into the adult area of further training and employment.

The quality of teaching and assessment

Teaching and learning are inadequate overall. The quality of teaching ranges from good to unsatisfactory. Weaknesses in unsatisfactory lessons often relate to the choice of teaching strategies and to the management of pupils' behaviour. While a number of pupils progress well in areas such as art and design, food technology and ICT, achievements overall are limited. A number of lessons observed were disrupted by challenging and inappropriate behaviour, which was not dealt with effectively. As a result the pace and rate of learning were very slow for all present. Some staff lack expertise in dealing with the extremes of behavioural difficulties.

Where teaching is good, lessons are lively and purposeful and pupils are challenged effectively, with work which stretches them. In such lessons relationships are generally very good and staff use these well to manage behaviour and create a pleasant atmosphere where pupils enjoy their work.

Staff knowledge of the subjects they are responsible for is satisfactory. Lesson planning has improved recently and teachers are now clearer about how to set

objectives for the lesson. However, some plans still lack precision as to what is intended for the individual pupils to learn and generally lessons do not provide sufficiently for pupils' individual learning styles.

Assessment procedures are inadequate. A factor contributing to pupils' lack of progress is the weakness regarding the assessment and recording of their achievements. No-one in the school guides teachers' practice. Baseline assessment has just begun but, at present, teachers have little to go on when they plan lessons and devise activities that are designed to extend pupils' previously acquired skills. They also have limited access to pupils' previous records. The school has inadequate systems in place to track gains in pupils' skills and knowledge. Consequently, there is insufficient information for accurate reporting on an individual's progress.

The school is moving towards the implementation of a wider range of accreditation including, Awards Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN), General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) at Entry Level and Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT). Pupils do not yet benefit from a structured framework, within which they can work at their own pace and be accurately assessed.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

No.

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

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *implement appropriate curriculum plans and schemes of work (paragraph 1(2));*
- *develop a curriculum framework that gives all pupils the opportunity to learn and make progress (paragraph 1(2)(i));*
- *prepare pupils more effectively for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life (paragraph 1(2)(j));*
- *improve the quality of teaching so that pupils learn effectively (paragraph 1(3)(a));*
- *provide interesting activities that encourage pupils to apply themselves and develop responsibility for their own learning (paragraph 1(3)(b));*
- *improve lesson planning and develop teaching methods and activities that meet individual pupils' needs (paragraph 1(3)(c));*
- *provide learning activities that derive from teachers' secure understanding of their pupils' prior achievements (paragraph 1(3)(d));*
- *ensure classroom resources are of an adequate quality, quantity and range and that they are used effectively (paragraph 1(3)(f));*

- *devise and implement systems for routinely assessing and recording pupils' achievements and use this information when planning lessons (paragraph 1(3)(g)); and,*
- *put in place a framework by which pupil performance can be evaluated by reference to either the school's own aims, as provided to parents and/or, by national norms (paragraph 1(4)).*

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

Provision for pupils' social development is satisfactory but provision for their spiritual, moral and cultural development is inadequate. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually. There are no identified periods for reflection and no whole-school assemblies. Neither is this dimension of the pupils' experience addressed through the curriculum, as the teaching of religious education does not take place.

Pupils' moral development is unsatisfactory because staff approaches to enforcing discipline and promoting good behaviour are inconsistent. The school's rules are not always implemented effectively. Whilst the behaviour policy helps pupils to distinguish right from wrong, they have too few opportunities to think for themselves, develop independence and take responsibility for their learning.

Opportunities for pupils' social development are satisfactory. The PE programme provides pupils with opportunities for professional coaching in rugby and football and visits to the local shops and places of historical interest take place from time to time. The school is at an early stage of teaching aspects of citizenship and the programme does not adequately help pupils gain an understanding and knowledge of public institutions and services in England.

The cultural development of pupils is not adequately promoted. Through aspects of art, English and food technology pupils learn about British culture and traditions. However, there are too few opportunities for them to learn about other cultures, faiths and religions.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

No.

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

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence (paragraph 2(a));*
- *encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative, and understand how they can contribute to community life (paragraph 2(c));*
- *provide pupils with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England (paragraph 2(d)); and*

- *assist pupils to acquire an appreciation of other cultures, in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions (paragraph 2(e)).*

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Pupils are safeguarded and protected by the staff, who have appropriate guidelines and training to deal with situations which cause concern. All staff understand their responsibilities in relation to pupils' welfare, health and safety. Policies have been given careful consideration so that the health and safety risks to pupils are minimised. The health and safety guidelines used in the school are contained in a company document that relates mainly to the workplace. They are not specific to education and as such do not give enough regard to DfES guidelines. Policies include procedures for child protection, anti-bullying strategies, health and safety issues, fire safety, and educational visits, and these are implemented well. Fire safety precautions are carried out regularly and are systematically recorded. However, although incidents of aggression and misdemeanors are recorded, there is little information about which sanctions have been used. For the occasions when physical restraint is required, all staff have been trained in appropriate procedures, which are based on clear policies.

A major failing is the implementation of the policy for the management of behaviour, which is not rigorous enough to provide pupils with clear boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. School rules, such as those relating to smoking, leaving lessons and swearing are continually flouted. The intentions of the policy in offering rewards and incentives, and in building on positive experiences, are not effective and as a result pupils' behaviour in some lessons and in leisure time is poor. This is exacerbated by the absence of representative staff from the care homes from which the pupils come. The school is therefore lacking educational support staff to assist those with the most difficult behaviour and to act as communicators between the care homes and the school. While arrangements for the registration of admissions and attendance meet the requirements, there is a high percentage of unauthorized absence which is the result of pupils in care absconding. The school has appropriate washroom facilities for disabled persons but it has not yet drawn up plans to improve access for those with disabilities.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

No.

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

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *implement a written policy to promote good behaviour amongst pupils (paragraph 3(2)(d));*
- *have regard to the DfES guidance: "Health and Safety: Responsibilities and Powers" (paragraph 3(4)); and*

- *keep written records of sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious disciplinary offences (paragraph 3(8)).*

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

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.*

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

There is a rigorous staff appointment process in place where staff have their professional expertise checked through evidence from previous employers, character references and professional qualifications. All staff are checked to ensure that they are medically suitable to work with children. Clearance is obtained from the Criminal Records Bureau for all staff prior to the confirmation of their appointment.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The building provides adequate and well presented accommodation for educating the number of pupils who attend the school. There are specialist rooms for most subjects and good use is made of the life skills kitchen for food preparation lessons and to support pupils' independence skills. There is a designated area for art, an ICT room and a small science room. The latter is too small and lacks basic specialist resources, such as a sink. The whole school has recently been refurbished and classrooms are bright and clean, and are furnished according to the needs and ages of the pupils. The building is located in compact surroundings, which include a small, appropriately fenced grassed area and hard play area. These areas are too restricted for physical activity and in order to compensate for this the school makes good use of the local community facilities.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

There is an informative prospectus which contains a clear statement of the school's ethos and its expectations. All the necessary details on procedures, contact phone numbers and important policies are included. The school collects information concerning pupils' previous history and, where possible, the academic levels they have attained. Added to this are educational reports from review meetings and end of year reports. All this information is available to pupils, parents, carers and other professionals who are involved with the pupils. The reports contain satisfactory information concerning the achievements of pupils in the subjects taught. The

company does not produce details of income and expenditure for the pupils' local authorities.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets all but one of the regulations.

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

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *where a pupil, who is registered at the school, is wholly or partly funded by the local authority, provide an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil and submit this to the local authority and, on request, to the Secretary of State (paragraph 6(7)).*

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

The school has a clear complaints policy, which sets out appropriate procedures, responsibilities and time-scales for dealing with complaints.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Denby Grange School
DfES Number:	384/6129
Type of school:	Special
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 16 Girls: 4 Total: 20
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys: 14 Girls: 3 Total: 17
Annual fees (day pupils):	£24,500
Address of school:	Off Stocksmoor Road Midgley Wakefield WF4 4JQ
Telephone number:	01924 830096
Fax number:	01924 830824
Email address:	denby.g.school@btinternet.com
Headteacher:	Miss Jennie Littleboy
Proprietor:	Heather Laffin
Reporting Inspector:	Sheila Boyle
Date of inspection:	11 -14 September 2006

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