

Nugent House School

Independent Special School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number	342/6004
Unique Reference Number	104839
Inspection number	296854
Inspection dates	14-15 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Honoree Gordon HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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

Nugent House school is a Roman Catholic residential special school, part of the Nugent Care organisation. It is approved by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The school is situated in a village near Wigan. There are 65 boys on roll aged 10 to 18 years; some are residential and some are day pupils. All have been placed at the school by local authorities and have statements specifying their additional care and educational needs. The boys have severe emotional and behavioural difficulties which in most cases have led to exclusion from previous schools and disrupted their education. The school has recently emerged from an unsettled period with several changes in staffing and in leadership. The headteacher has been in post since January 2007. The boarding provision is inspected by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI).

Evaluation of the school

The quality of education at Nugent House is satisfactory and some aspects are good. The premises and accommodation are outstanding and the care for pupils' health, safety and welfare is good. The school meets all the regulations. It has improved the provision and use of information and communication technology (ICT) since the last inspection, but has made less progress in improving assessment. Good links between care and education support pupils well in managing their behaviour. However these are less effective in tracking pupils' academic progress and development of skill. The last CSCI inspection in November 2006 judged that the school met the national minimum standards for a residential special school in all aspects and exceeded most of them. The new headteacher has brought a much-needed impetus to the coordination and monitoring of the educational provision.

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is broad and balanced and it meets the pupils' needs as laid down in their statements. However, the links between the welfare and educational aspects do not reinforce each other as well as they might. For example, there is good overlap in promoting positive behaviour but not in furthering individual pupils' objectives for their learning. It is not clear how each subject and lesson ties in with the personal aims for each pupil, beyond

improving their behaviour. As a result, some opportunities are missed to relate the two aspects of the work of the school. The headteacher is aware of this and has begun to link the two better.

Good emphasis is placed on literacy and numeracy, aiming to fill the gaps in pupils' education. The curriculum model is well-conceived, with links across a good range of different subjects. It includes drama, art and music. The school garden is a particular strength: it provides hands-on training in horticulture and also therapeutic work for particular pupils who are judged to benefit from this. Other therapies are accessed through outside links and professionals. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 attend vocational courses weekly at a nearby college, but the school recognises the need for further development in how the curriculum prepares pupils for the next stage in their lives.

A good range of extra-curricular activities is available during the day, such as playing with the model railway. Activities after school and at weekends include sporting activities and trips out. These make a valuable and popular contribution to pupils' progress in academic skills and to their personal development.

Many pupils leave school with accredited qualifications, usually General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE), and sometimes pupils make sufficient progress to obtain good grades. This reflects the determination of the school and its pupils to benefit from the advantages of the small classes and the good resources.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory overall. Much of the teaching is good, but its quality varies. Most teachers manage challenging behaviour well, but disruption and noise hold up progress in some lessons. The teachers are all subject specialists and the resources are good.

Pupils make satisfactory progress. Assessment systems are still at a developmental stage but the new systems are better suited to track pupils' progress than in the past. The systems are not yet used consistently by all staff and subjects, but in some subjects, such as in mathematics and in the nurture group, they are used effectively to encourage pupils and to build up a clear picture of their strengths and weaknesses. Lessons are then tailored well to build up pupils' skills and knowledge.

Where teaching is most successful, pupils have a clear idea of what they are learning and why; they are co-operative and willing to learn. Their views are sought, they are encouraged to think creatively and they get involved in taking greater responsibility for evaluating their own learning. Links with other subjects add value to lessons. For example, a good personal, social, citizenship and health education (PSCHE) lesson on personal safety when using mobile phones also furthered pupils' skills in working together and in literacy as they

worked in pairs to create an imaginary crime report. The lesson was both useful and enjoyable.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is satisfactory. Given their troubled past history, the pupils generally show positive attitudes to school and contribute well to lessons when engaged by the subject matter or teaching. Pupils comment that they feel they have learnt to manage their behaviour better through the supportive atmosphere in the school. Relationships between pupils and staff are good. Behaviour is satisfactory; for many pupils this represents considerable progress. Parents' comments indicate that they are pleased with the progress that their children are making.

There is a comprehensive PSCHE programme which assists pupils in their social and moral development. This programme also provides education about citizenship. The merit system, linked to rewards, operates effectively to encourage effort and behaviour in lessons and around school. Catholic values underpin much of the work and promote pupils' spiritual education. Pupils learn a little about other cultures and religions through their PSCHE programme, though further planned opportunities could usefully be sought to strengthen this aspect of their education.

There is no formal life-skills programme, but older pupils are encouraged to become more independent in looking after themselves and in getting out and about. Pupils have opportunities to express their views on how they are looked after and to get involved in competitive sport, fundraising activities and the school council, as part of the school's drive to foster a more positive contribution to society.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is good. Pupils are closely supervised. The strong system of pastoral support helps them feel safe and encourages them in managing their behaviour and in taking responsibility for this. To further support pupils there is a range of complementary therapies both on and off the site. The school nurse is an asset in promoting healthcare for the pupils. A healthy diet is encouraged by the catering officer, in conjunction with the care staff. Pupils have good opportunities for exercise in the school sports hall, through visits to the local swimming pool and through taking part in other off-site activities, including canoeing. All the required policies and procedures are in place to help safeguard pupils. There are good links with health and other professionals to promote the pupils' health and well-being. Communication between care and education staff works well to promote

the improvement of behaviour but the flow of information between care and education teams on academic progress and on how pupils' skills are developing is less effective.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All the required checks are conducted on staff prior to their appointment. These arrangements also meet the requirements of CSCI.

School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises and accommodation and the residential houses are outstanding. The boarding houses are newly built, attractive, welcoming and comfortable, grouped in a cul-de-sac as in a residential suburb. The grounds have ample space for relaxation and for exercise, with a play area and all-weather sports pitch. The semi-rural setting, surrounded by green space provides a most conducive environment for a school of this nature. Pupils appreciate their surroundings and take good care of them. The school has many classrooms and specialist facilities including a science laboratory, a sports hall, art room, two ICT suites and a new food technology room. There is a chapel where assemblies are held and where the Mass is celebrated. The school garden is staffed and used extensively to enhance the curriculum and, at times, to provide food for the kitchen.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The information provided for parents is good. There is an attractive, up to date prospectus written in a user-friendly format, which provides all the required information and makes clear to parents what other information they may request from the school. Parents receive written reports on their children's progress as part of their annual review, and other regular contact as appropriate. There are fortnightly visits home for pupils.

Procedures for handling complaints

The procedures for complaints are carefully detailed and they meet all the requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

What the school could do to improve further

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

- strengthen the links between education and care to better track academic progress and to plan for the development of pupils' skills
- extend the range of academic pathways and accreditation and the provision for lifeskills so as to help prepare pupils for the next stage in their lives
- improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good.

School details

Name of school	Nugent House School
DfES number	342/6004
Unique reference number	104839
Type of school	Special residential school
Status	Independent
Date school opened	18 February 1983
Age range of pupils	7-19 years
Gender of pupils	Male
Number on roll	65
Number of boarders	35
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	65
Number of pupils who are looked after	21
Annual fees (day pupils)	£45,957-£57,270
Annual fees (boarders)	£66,843-£87,567
Address of school	Nugent House School Carr Mill Road Billinge Wigan Lancashire WN5 7TT
Telephone number	01744 892551
Fax number	01744 895697
Email address	jenny@nugent.wigan.sch.uk
Headteacher	Ms Wendy Sparling
Proprietor	Nugent Care
Reporting inspector	Ms Honoree Gordon HMI
Dates of inspection	14-15 March 2007