

Lambs Grange School

Independent Special School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	875/6028
Unique Reference Number	131792
Inspection number	301545
Inspection dates	12-13 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Sue Aldridge

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

Lambs Grange is an independent residential special school that caters for students aged 14-19 with autism. Several students have health needs and challenging behaviour. The school opened in September 1998 and is also registered as a children's home with Ofsted's Children's Directorate to provide daily, weekly, termly and 52-week placements. Most students are residential although a few attend daily. Boys outnumber girls and all have statements of special educational need. The site includes a large manor house and a lodge situated in 10 acres. Residential accommodation is situated in the manor house and two chalets in the grounds. Teaching blocks are separate from the main house. The school was last inspected in February 2002 and this was followed by a period of expansion. Since then the ownership of the school has changed. The new owners inherited a large deficit and have appointed a business manager who has started to remedy this.

Evaluation of the school

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education. There are high standards of care provided in the residential setting but the school does not meet many of the independent schools' regulations designed to assure students' welfare, health and safety. As a result, these arrangements are inadequate. The shortage of funds affects the day-to-day running of the school. Staff salaries are not being paid on the due date and managers have been unable to fully implement plans for development. As a result, there has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection.

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory. It includes all the required areas of learning and enables pupils to make satisfactory academic progress and to acquire personal skills and positive qualities. The curriculum meets students' needs as described on their statements. There is a suitable emphasis on communication, social interaction and behaviour as well as personal, social and health education. All students have access to the skills of staff trained in speech and language therapy and this ensures that they make good progress in acquiring communication skills. For students with challenging behaviour, there is some very skilled intervention by a member of the teaching staff with particular expertise in this area. However, not all students benefit

from this. The school aims to make the curriculum relevant to each pupil by identifying targets for each to work towards in school and in the residence or at home. These 'joint targets' are not always as relevant as they might be. The curriculum is suitable for the ages of the students; it includes careers education and guidance, and sex and relationships education. College links enable students to follow vocational courses and there is work experience for those for whom this is appropriate. The school also provides accreditation through Accreditation for Life and Living (ALL) and the National Skills Profile (NSP). These do not yet cover all curriculum areas and there are plans to introduce unit awards accredited by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA). Since the last inspection, the school has improved its provision by developing sensory approaches for those that need this. However, not all plans have been implemented because of a lack of funds. Good use is made of the local community to enrich the curriculum and provide opportunities for students to develop their leisure interests, particularly in the residence.

Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. Staff get to know the students, their abilities and their idiosyncrasies well. The whole-school approach to the implementation of particular methods and strategies works effectively. For instance, the use of 'traffic light' discs (to mark changes in activity), schedules and individual work-stations is well established. Students soon get to know the routine of working on their particular tasks and placing completed work in their basket. Effective use of the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) ensures that all have a means of communicating with others, although this does not extend to the use of computer software to enable pupils to write using symbols. There is a good ratio of staff to students in classes which results in students being actively engaged in most lessons. Occasionally, students elect to take time out, by selecting their 'Go' symbol, and this limits the progress that they make in lessons. Lessons are well planned to make learning meaningful to the students, incorporating visits so that activities are related to the world of work. Since the last inspection there has been limited improvement in resources because of lack of funds. Leading up to and during the inspection, staff were purchasing resources themselves, such as the ingredients for cookery. Certain resources are not appropriate for the ages of the students as they are intended for use by much younger children.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Whilst at the school, all students mature and improve their behaviour, which is satisfactory. They quickly learn to respect the traffic light system that warns them that tasks are starting or finishing, or that they need to wait. For the few who are given expert help, there are good improvements, such as significant reductions in self-harming. However, there is no whole school approach to training additional staff in similar techniques, so improvement is less dramatic for some. Where students understand the process, they are involved in setting their targets so they become more responsible, for example for improving their punctuality to lessons. Those in

residence take increasing responsibility for their personal hygiene and complete simple chores such as shopping, setting the table and making snacks. Students also grow vegetables, recycle materials, raise funds for charity and run mini-enterprises. Their self-confidence grows as they improve their skills. Through subjects such as religious education, students learn about other cultures and customs. They find out about their own culture and the services in their community through frequent visits. Students also develop their self-awareness as they identify likes and dislikes.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

Although the school has a suitable range of policies, these do not fully meet the regulations; as a result, arrangements for welfare, health and safety are inadequate. Regulations are not met in relation to the anti-bullying policy, safeguarding students, risk assessments for educational visits, fire safety, the sanctions policy and the admissions register. Suitable steps have been taken to address the minor recommendations of the most recent inspection of the residence by the Commission for Social Care Inspectorate (CSCI).

Staff provide good pastoral support and take seriously their responsibility for the students' personal development. The arrangements to support transition beyond school are good and parents appreciate the support that families receive. Supervision is good and the school works closely with parents, carers and external agencies. Students feel safe and say that there is always someone to turn to if they need help. Students are encouraged to follow a healthy lifestyle, with opportunities to take part in physical activities. Staff work closely together and with students to develop healthy eating habits.

The school's health and safety policy has regard for DCSF guidance, but its implementation is not consistent. Regular independent checks are made but some previously identified concerns remain outstanding. In addition, the school cannot demonstrate that its minibuses are regularly checked and maintained. Because of the shortage of funds, some corners are being cut. For example, during the inspection, one minibus was being driven without a spare tyre as this was punctured. The school does not comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002; it has yet to undertake an audit of the premises and draw up an accessibility plan.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Before staff are appointed the school carries out all the required checks and ensures that they are suitable to work with children.

School's premises and accommodation

Overall, the premises and accommodation are of a satisfactory standard. Classrooms, bedrooms and recreational rooms are of appropriate size and maintained on a daily

basis to a good standard. The overall standard of furnishing and decoration is satisfactory but there are some locations where rain penetrates through ceilings and skylights. There are grassed and hard-surfaced areas for recreation and students use local facilities for swimming and other physical activities. Students' bedrooms are personalised and the provision of residential bathroom facilities is good. However, the shared washroom facilities for male and female students during teaching time and the inadequate provision of such facilities for staff and visitors do not meet regulations. The school's records indicate that the temperature of the hot water in some locations varies widely and sometimes exceeds recommended levels.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school has a well presented prospectus, although this does not fully reflect the policy on exclusions. There is also an admissions pack for parents and carers. Neither of these documents draws attention to the policies on anti-bullying and health and safety. The school sends out regular and informative reports to parents and carers and circulates to all parties the information required prior to an annual review. However, no annual account of income and expenditure is sent to local authorities who place students at the school.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a written complaints procedure and includes this in an admission pack for parents. However, the procedure does not include some of the required information.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of teaching and assessment (standard 1) and must:

- ensure that classroom resources are of adequate quantity, quality and range and that they are used effectively (paragraph 1(3)(f)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- ensure that the anti-bullying policy reflects the DCSF guidance *Bullying: don't suffer in silence (DCSF 0064/2000)* (paragraph 3(2)(a))

- maintain a single central record showing the checks carried out on staff prior to their appointment in accordance with DCSF guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education (2007)* (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- ensure that the risk assessments carried out prior to educational visits comply with the guidance in *Health and safety of pupils on educational visits (reference HSPV2)* (paragraph 3(2)(c))
- ensure that the sanctions policy defines what constitutes a serious disciplinary offence (paragraph 3(2)(d))
- ensure that fire alarms are tested weekly and that fire drills are held regularly and recorded as required (paragraph 3(5))
- ensure that records of sanctions are maintained as required (paragraph 3(8))
- ensure that the admission register lists students in alphabetical order and shows whether they are day or residential students (paragraph 3(9)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- ensure that the temperature of the hot water supply does not exceed recommended levels (paragraph 5(a))
- ensure that the school buildings provide reasonable resistance to penetration by rain, snow, and wind (paragraph 5(f))
- provide sufficient washrooms for staff and students in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(k)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- provide particulars of the school's policy on exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e))
- ensure that parents are aware they can request policies on bullying and health and safety (paragraph 6(2)(h))
- provide local authorities with an annual account of income and expenditure in respect of each student (paragraph 6(7)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of procedures for handling complaints (standard 7) and must:

- make clear in the policy that the panel findings and recommendations will be sent to the complainant, proprietor, headteacher and, where relevant, the person complained about (paragraph 7(i))
- include in the complaints policy a statement that correspondence, statements and records of complaints will be kept confidential (paragraph 7(k)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

School details

Name of school	Lambs Grange School		
DCSF number	875/6028		
Unique reference number	131792		
Type of school	Residential special school for students with autism		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 1998		
Age range of students	14-19 years		
Gender of students	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 17	Girls: 3	Total: 20
Number of boarders	Boys: 13	Girls: 1	Total: 14
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 17	Girls: 3	Total: 20
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 5	Girls: 1	Total: 6
Annual fees (day students)	£61,800 - £70,200		
Annual fees (boarders)	£104,827 - £193,891		
Address of school	Forest Road Cuddington Northwich Cheshire CW8 2EH		
Telephone number	01606 301514		
Fax number	01606 301516		
Email address	enquiries@lambs-group.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Jonathan Wilkins		
Proprietor	Mr Simon Lovelock		
Reporting inspector	Sue Aldridge		
Dates of inspection	12-13 July 2007		