



The Amicus School

Independent School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number 938/6265
Unique Reference Number 131504
Inspection number 302745
Inspection dates 27 February 2007
Reporting inspector Steffi Penny 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).

Age group 7-12	Published 23 March 2007	Reference no. 302745
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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

The Amicus Community is a residential and educational provision for looked after children aged between seven and twelve years. It was registered in November 2004 and the school moved to the present building in January 2007. Pupils are placed at the Amicus Community because they have acute emotional needs and often have severe behavioural difficulties. The provision is for a maximum of three children although there are plans to increase this to six children when it opens another children's home later in 2007. At the time of inspection one pupil was being educated off the school site. The Amicus Community aims to raise pupils' self-esteem by providing a warm, caring, safe, nurturing environment where pupils can have enjoyable educational experiences. The educational practice is intrinsically linked to Amicus' psychodynamic approach and the work that the children do in school is part of their therapeutic living experience.

Evaluation of the school

This is a good school, much appreciated by those pupils who attend. Teaching and care staff meet the provision's aims very well. For most pupils this is the first time that they can live and learn without extreme fear or anxiety. Good teaching is founded on the trusting relationships that exist between staff and pupils. This ensures pupils make good progress in improving their academic learning and in managing their behaviour. The school provides a very high standard of care due to the close working relationship between the education and care staff. The school meets all but one of the regulatory requirements.

Quality of education

The school provides a good quality of education.

The curriculum is good because it puts the pupils at the heart of the planning. It is not only tailored to the pupils' particular needs, but also gives them access to the full range of National Curriculum subjects. The school rightly places a high priority on providing structured, safe routines and boundaries so that the pupils have a sense of safe containment and are not filled with fear of the

unknown. Developing the children's self-esteem and confidence is another vital part of the curriculum.

There is a strong emphasis on the development of personal skills through the personal, social and health education programme (PSHE). At the commencement of the school day the pupils to have a morning meeting. This acts also as a handover, involving the therapeutic care worker/s on duty at that time. It incorporates PSHE and this leads onto the contents of the morning lessons and any anxieties the pupils may have about the lessons are discussed.

The quality of teaching is good. In the classroom all pupils receive high quality support from the multidisciplinary team who give unfaltering attention to each individual's targets and agreed approaches. Great consideration is given to each pupil's individual educational needs and emotional development. This enables the pupils to make good and excellent progress in lessons. Every lesson begins by telling the pupils what it is they are going to be doing and what the learning outcome is for that lesson. This helps to reduce pupil anxiety about learning new things and being challenged. One to one teaching is provided within the lessons when appropriate and always for the 'Toe by Toe' literacy reading programme. Resources for information and communication technology (ICT) along with other curriculum areas are being developed. These will further enhance the learning opportunities for pupils.

The teacher has continuous contact with the pupils all day. They and she would benefit with a break from each other after the morning session so that she can more easily have time to adapt the afternoon sessions based on the pupils' responses to the morning's activities.

Considering their very low starting points and previous general disaffection with school pupils make good progress. Staff make good quality, thorough assessments of pupils' achievements for each day. This information is used successfully to decide the next most appropriate learning experiences for pupils. A great strength of this process is the way in which assessments and targets are used consistently for the pupils over a range of learning situations, including opportunities within the residential provision. The annual review reports provide comprehensive information about pupils' current progress and approaches to their learning that are most fruitful.

The teacher provides well planned activities for the one pupil who is temporarily being educated off site by care staff. There are long term plans to reintegrate him into the classroom, but these need to be implemented in the shorter term in order to enhance his future life chances. Currently it is extremely difficult and time consuming for the teacher to accurately gauge his educational progress and future needs. There are also long term plans to appoint another member of teaching staff and to provide for both of them to have planning and training time. These are crucial to the development of teaching in the school.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The progress that pupils are making, from their very low starting points, in the development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is good. Most are beginning to show the rudiments of empathy to others and to offer acts of reparation. This is a huge and vital developmental step for them. The school provides pupils with a range of opportunities to appreciate their own spiritual and cultural traditions along with the diversity and richness of those of others. Pupils' moral development is encouraged through the curriculum and also by the good role models of adults in the school.

The pupils who attend school say they enjoy being there in spite of the challenges that it presents to them. They particularly enjoy the roles and responsibilities that they have in the classroom, contributing to the school community. Pupils take an active role in their reviews, voice their concerns and share their ideas with staff.

Pupils have significant behavioural difficulties and have attitudes to learning that vary to the extreme and which can change very quickly. They are given very clear boundaries and guidance on how to behave. Evidence over time indicates that pupils respond well and increasingly learn how to control their emotions. They were impeccably polite and considerate to the inspector.

Pupils are prepared well for the next stage in their education through the development of basic skills, along with increased levels of motivation and self esteem. Attendance for the two pupils in the school is good.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

An outstanding level of welfare, health and safety can be seen in all aspects of the school. The full range of required policies is in place and adults demonstrate the high levels of commitment, skill, expertise and attention to detail required for teaching and caring for this complex group of pupils. All staff know the pupils very well. This is because of the attention given to assessing their needs and achievements, as well as evaluating how they respond to individual tasks. The curriculum and the use of other outdoor facilities promote the notion of healthy eating and regular exercise effectively.

The school meets the accessibility requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school undertakes the full range of checks to ensure the suitability of all staff to work with these highly vulnerable children.

School's premises and accommodation

The newly built classroom has been refurbished to help the children feel both inspired and excited by their surroundings. The pupils are rightly proud of their work that is celebrated and exhibited on the walls. The classroom presents a safe, attractive and interesting place in which to start re-building pupils' interest and confidence in school life, as well as offering them the chance to re-experience the early building blocks of education that these children have missed. The school is situated within a rural setting with access to playgrounds, the beach within a short driving distance; nearby is an ancient town and many local places of interest. The school is aware that it needs to provide a safe outdoor recreation area for pupils and is awaiting planning permission to address this. Negotiations are currently taking place to provide an external recreation area for the pupils and planning permission will be sought if required.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides a good range of information for parents, pupils, carers inspectors, Ofsted and the DfES on request, that comply with all of the relevant regulations.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's complaints procedure meets all the requirements for registration. The complaints procedures are clear, fair and understood by the school community.

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 the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide a safe outside play area for pupils (paragraph 5t).

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:

- recruit another member of teaching staff as planned

- integrate all pupils so that they are taught by the teacher on site
- provide adequate preparation and training time for teaching staff
- develop the resources for ICT and other curriculum areas as planned.

School details

Name of school	The Amicus School		
DfES number	938/6265		
Unique reference number	131504		
Type of school	Day		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	November 2004		
Age range of pupils	7-12		
Gender of pupils	Male		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 3	Girls:	Total: 3
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 2	Girls:	Total: 2
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 3	Girls:	Total: 3
Annual fees (day pupils)	£11,015		
Address of school	The Amicus School 2 Yeoman's Nursery Warningcamp Arundel West Sussex BN17 6UP		
Telephone number	01903 885135		
Email address	adrianadams@theamicuscommunity.com		
Headteacher	Mrs Olga Cumberland		
Proprietor	Mr Adrian Adams		
Reporting inspector	Steffi Penny HMI		
Dates of inspection	27 February 2007		