



The Chelsea Group of Children

Independent Special School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number 207/6395
Unique Reference Number 131662
Inspection number 302777
Inspection dates 1-2 March 2007
Reporting inspector Jill Bainton

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 4-10	Published 26 March 2007	Reference no. 302777
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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 Chelsea Group of Children is an independent day school for pupils aged four to eleven which opened in 1997. It is located in specially adapted premises, which are part of a converted warehouse in Chelsea. Currently there are 11 pupils on roll aged five to ten, eight of whom have a statement of special need. Pupils are mainly identified as having autistic spectrum tendencies and are taught in very small groups by specialist staff.

The school aims to 'prepare the children to cope confidently with their own difficulties and develop strategies which they can use in their future experiences.'

Evaluation of the school

The Chelsea Group of Children is successful in meeting its aims. It is an exceptional school, providing an outstanding quality of education and a good standard of care, where all pupils are highly valued as individuals. As a result of the outstanding curriculum, which is expertly taught by the teachers, pupils make good progress. Much of this success is due to the vision and determination of the proprietor. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and its success with their children. The school meets all but one of the requirements for registration.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding and meets the needs of the pupils as it is specifically designed for each individual. The proprietor has carried out extensive research on the curriculum, which is based on the understanding of human cognition, social and cultural learning and this has resulted in a school ethos wherein each child's learning is seen as the driving force of their development. Each pupil's cognitive abilities and levels of development are carefully assessed on entry to the school and the curriculum then devised to meet these needs. A detailed individual education plan (IEP) is drawn up for each pupil which takes full account of any statement of special educational need and an appropriate curriculum is then devised and implemented

successfully in a small group or individual situation. The curriculum broadly covers all areas of the National Curriculum.

The pupils begin each day as a whole school group with a short reflective assembly. The pupils then divide into smaller groups with a specialist teacher. This division of pupils is based on ability rather than age. Each pupil will then move to an appropriate group for specific subjects. These are literacy, mathematics, movement, and development games and language development each morning. During each afternoon they have art, music, science, cookery and social and emotional development. Information and communication technology is used well to support pupils' learning. There are fully equipped teaching areas for literacy, mathematics, movement, music, art and cookery. Many of the pupils have sensory needs and the school has devised a specific programme to meet these needs in a specially adapted environment. The pupils have movement activities twice daily to focus on developing their specific physical needs.

Each pupil's communication, cognitive and developmental skills are assessed carefully and rigorously by specialist teachers and therapists, from the observation and analysis of their behaviour and capabilities. All pupils have specialist support from very well qualified occupational and speech and language therapists and parents have the option to access additional support.

A programme of educational visits outside the school further enhances and develops pupils' experiences. Regular visits around the locality familiarises pupils with everyday routines and experiences, for example shopping for the ingredients needed for cookery. The local park is used effectively to extend pupils' understanding of the world about them.

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding. The teachers are very well qualified and well informed. They have established very good relationships with the pupils, whom they know very well. They put this knowledge to excellent use to inform their planning and teaching. As a result, the pupils make good progress. The lessons are held in a quiet, purposeful atmosphere where each pupil is highly valued as an individual and their achievement, however small, is celebrated. The teachers are very patient and explain clearly to the pupils what they are going to do in the lesson. They encourage them to make eye contact if possible, then engage them in a range of well-planned activities designed to increase their knowledge and understanding. On the whole pupils respond positively, and if they lose concentration for a short time, staff support them in a sensitive way and reintroduce them to the task in hand. The very well qualified learning support assistants give outstanding support to individuals during lessons. Pupils' language skills are developed continually and new vocabulary introduced wherever possible. Sign language is used where necessary for those pupils with little or no language. Together with the specialist speech and language and occupational therapy support, this is

effective in improving pupils' speaking and listening skills. Movement is a regular feature of each day and pupils report that they particularly enjoy this activity in the specialist teaching area, where they can let off steam in a controlled and safe environment. The teachers are continually enabling and extending pupils' ability to cope with their individual problems and the world around them, much of which they may find confusing.

The teachers' assessments of pupils' progress during lessons and recording their achievements are continuous and effective. The IEPs are very well devised for each pupil and reflect the statement of special educational need where appropriate. A broad range of assessment programmes is used and the information compiled into their individual profile. Each pupil's progress is tracked and the information gained is then used to update their personal curriculum. Parents are given two detailed, written reports covering all areas of their child's development including social, physical and emotional aspects as well as their attainment in literacy and numeracy. The school has identified areas for further development, although these are not yet prioritised.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding. Most of them arrive at the school having experienced differing levels of failure at their previous setting, whether this is due to their lack of communication skills or behaviour problems. The school is successful in increasing pupils' self-esteem by establishing an environment in which they feel valued as individuals. With considerable sensitivity, staff encourage each pupil to be responsible for their own behaviour through an extensive support system.

Pupils report that they are happy at the school and they respond positively to the kind and caring staff. Their attendance is good. They are encouraged to behave well and most respond positively to this, as behaviour is good. Relationships are very strong at all levels with an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. Staff endeavour to lay the foundations for pupils' future independence and well-being. There are opportunities for pupils to use their initiative as they help devise their own 'contracts' each day, carry these with them and discuss them at the end of each lesson, when their progress and achievement are celebrated. The staff focus on the positive aspects and pupils are eager to share these with their parents. There is a highly structured school day and pupils are aware of the routines. Positive interaction with each pupil is fostered, and pupils are taught how to resolve conflicts which may arise during the school day. The school is small and there is a family atmosphere where each pupil feels part of the whole. Pupils said: '*I like my school ...movement is fun...I like playing in the park*'.

The school welcomes different cultures and faiths and holds festivals relevant to them, for example Chinese New Year and Divali. Each individual pupil's differences are celebrated and they are made to feel special. At the end of each day the group reflects on their day at school and pupils can express their feelings without inhibition, carefully guided by the staff. Pupils are introduced to the beauty of the world around them; they make extensive use of the local park, studying nature and the seasons. They recently watched as chickens hatched and frogs developed.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school has made good provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils. It is a safe place in which to work and learn. It encourages pupils to be aware of their own safety and well-being and has devised and implemented a comprehensive range of policies, which include those on anti-bullying, health and safety on visits outside school and behaviour. They are vigilant about fire safety and all staff have attended a fire awareness course. All accidents are carefully recorded and a member of staff trained in first aid is on the premises at all times. The school encourages the pupils to eat healthily, with fruit at break time, and to take regular exercise. Not all staff have yet received up-to-date training in safeguarding matters and this is currently being remedied. The school fulfils its duties with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school undertakes rigorously the full range of checks to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is located in part of a converted warehouse which has been adapted for its use. The classrooms are situated at different ends of the building and the pupils access each area by a very short, well supervised walk along the pavement. There are several main learning areas, which are used for teaching a specific aspect of the curriculum. Each area is made attractive and welcoming. The premises are maintained well.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school gives parents a good range of information, including a brief information sheet and a comprehensive website which is constantly updated. They are kept very well informed about every detail of their child's progress through regular contact, frequently arranged meetings and also by telephone.

They have two very detailed written reports on their child each year. The parents were overwhelmingly supportive of the school in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a set of procedures, which meets the regulations, and parents have recently been given a copy.

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 the one listed below.

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

- ensure that all staff receive training in line with DfES guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (2007) (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- prioritise the school development plan to identify areas for further development.

School details

Name of school	The Chelsea Group of Children		
DfES number	207/6395		
Unique reference number	131662		
Type of school	Primary special school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1997		
Age range of pupils	4-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll	Boys: 7	Girls: 4	Total: 11
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 4	Girls: 4	Total: 8
Annual fees	£15,825-£ 36,945		
Address of school	73 Uverdale Road London SW10 0SW		
Telephone number	0207 349 9664		
Fax number	0207 349 9657		
Email address	Chelseachildren@aol.com		
Headteacher	Ms Jessica Duemler		
Proprietor	Mrs Libby Hartman		
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton		
Dates of inspection	1-2 March 2007		