

Horton House School

Independent Special School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	810/6004
Unique Reference Number	133640
Inspection number	316838
Inspection dates	2-3 October 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 Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Horton House School occupies two sites approximately twenty minutes drive apart in semi-rural locations on the outskirts of Hull. Both school sites are in the same buildings as small, residential children's care homes. One is a large former manor house and the other a farmhouse, with some adjacent, additional classrooms. There are a further two sites not currently in use.

The school was registered in 2002. There are 16 pupils on roll, aged between 11 and 16, and one pupil who is over the age of 16. Most pupils are residential, for either 52 weeks or for term-time only, but some are day pupils. All are boys, with moderate to severe social, emotional or behavioural difficulties and have statements specifying the additional educational provision required to meet their particular needs. Most also have varying degrees of learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including autism and attention deficit disorders, and have usually suffered from disrupted education in the past.

The most recent inspection by the Commission for Social Care Inspectorate judged that the school and care homes meet the National Minimum Standards for welfare. The school has taken action since on recommendations. This is the school's first full inspection of education.

Evaluation of the school

Horton House School is successful in its aim of providing an environment where pupils who have moderate to severe learning or behavioural difficulties can flourish. As a result of good curricular provision and teaching, pupils make good progress, improve their behaviour and develop more positive attitudes to learning. The quality of education and care is good. The school meets nearly all of the regulations.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. The curriculum policy has sound aims and objectives, supported by appropriate schemes of work. It is broad and balanced and is carefully designed to meet the needs and to reflect the interests of pupils who have a wide range of difficulties. There is an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy, with

daily lessons in these. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met through a range of innovative approaches aimed at raising attainment. There are taster courses in modern foreign languages.

The curriculum is planned effectively, providing good continuity and progression in learning. Different strategies and tasks are set to suit individuals. Pupils have an individual education plan, with targets related accurately to the additional needs identified in their statements. This differentiation of work is a marked strength of the school's provision. Assessments of progress feed into this.

Pupils can follow award-bearing courses, including the Association of Qualifications Alliance Unit Awards and Entry-Level certification, in an increasing range of curriculum subjects. Older pupils benefit from a 'Leavers' Programme' which makes a valuable contribution to their personal and social development, independence and preparation for adult life. Pupils undertake work experience and there are good links with the Connexions service for post-school and vocational guidance. The range of vocational opportunities has increased, for example to encompass animal husbandry and bricklaying.

Pupils' educational experiences are significantly enriched by a very good range of extra-curricular opportunities, including community activities and ways to contribute to the school community. Outward-bound and sporting activities feature strongly. There are weekly swimming sessions and physical education lessons, providing good opportunities for individual exercise and for team games. These significantly enhance pupils' self-awareness and personal confidence and contribute greatly to their enjoyment of school.

Teaching is good and never less than satisfactory. Lessons are tailored effectively to the educational needs of each pupil. As a result, pupils make good progress over time. Teachers use an appropriate range of strategies, drawing on pupils' interests to encourage co-operation and to provide the stimulus for successful learning.

Sometimes pupils' progress and the pace of lessons are hindered because of pupils' behavioural patterns or the stage of their personal development. In general, pupils' attitudes to work are positive; motivation and concentration are good. Pupils know their behaviour targets and they respond well to the incentives of the reward system.

The teachers and instructors are well-qualified, with sound subject knowledge and a confident teaching style. They develop and use imaginative resources. Resources are adequate, despite some deficiencies, for example, in equipment for science and in the range of information and communication (ICT) resources. Pupils can access the internet to support their learning on only one site. ICT resources help to promote learning by appealing to different learning styles, as seen in a good geography lesson on the weather, which held pupils' interest well.

Classroom assistants make a valuable team contribution to the personalised learning programmes. They help with effective management of pupils' behaviour. Pupils receive honest feedback on their work and behaviour, usually structured in a way that boosts their confidence and self-esteem.

Assessment systems are good. A number of recent developments are expected to enhance these still further. They include more rigorous assessment on entry to the school, termly evaluations of progress, and the introduction of a specialised scheme for assessing the progress of pupils with learning difficulties.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and is a strength of the school. Pupils' moral education is extensively promoted. Teachers and care staff stress the importance of developing social skills and moral responsibility. They encourage pupils to be self-aware and to be increasingly able to control their own responses to conflict.

The teachers and care staff provide very good role models, treating pupils with courtesy and respect. This encourages trust and so engenders positive responses from the pupils. The wide range of experiences and activities in the curriculum actively promote self-esteem, and as a result pupils' enjoyment and confidence grow. There are good opportunities, through the outward bound trips, for example, for them to develop team-working skills. Within the school and care home communities pupils are further encouraged to take on responsibility for daily tasks.

Behaviour is satisfactory. In several lessons observed pupils' behaviour was good, especially when the lessons were stimulating and lively and pupils were able to take an active part. This represents considerable and often significant progress for individuals, given their past experiences of education and their often very challenging behaviour patterns. Their attendance is good.

There are good systems for rewards and sanctions, tailored to individual pupils' needs, as identified in their behaviour plans. The staff apply the systems fairly. The boys have contributed to drawing up the rules.

The curriculum contributes much to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural education. Opportunities for spiritual education are adequate and through religious education pupils learn about other cultures and religions. The school has improved this aspect since it opened. These lessons actively promote understanding, empathy and tolerance. Through discussions and timetabled lessons pupils learn about the British way of life and institutions. The personal, social and health programme helps raise awareness of the dangers of risk-taking behaviour.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

There is good provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. Pupils are well cared for. All the required records and policies are in place to underpin this. Pupils are supervised closely, but not obtrusively. Good relationships amongst the staff and between pupils and staff promote a calm, happy atmosphere in the school and care homes. The clear rules for behaviour ensure an orderly environment. Pupils receive good support and guidance from staff, and through the curriculum, on how to keep themselves safe. Pupils say that they are happy in the school and that they are confident the staff will deal with any possible incidence of bullying.

There are very good opportunities for pupils to take part in healthy exercise and to develop interests and self-esteem through these. Pupils are taught the importance of good daily routines, including personal hygiene and they follow specific programmes aimed at preparing them towards being independent. These include how to shop and prepare healthy meals for themselves. The school and care homes draw effectively on outside professionals to support pupils' emotional and physical health needs.

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

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All the checks currently required to be conducted on the staff of the school and care homes have been satisfactorily completed. These include a check with the Criminal Records Bureau at an enhanced level and the maintenance of a single central register.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises are good; they are well-suited to education and are in good decorative order. Both sites provide a pleasant environment for learning. Classrooms are spacious, warm and comfortable. The bedroom accommodation is most attractive and pupils have personalised their rooms. Meals are taken in the dining kitchens on each site.

There are specific day rooms for pupils whose behaviour is particularly challenging. These are welcoming, suitably furnished and equipped to help those pupils feel at ease. The school makes good use of off-site facilities located nearby, especially for sport and recreation. The garden areas provide space for younger pupils to play and in addition there are indoor recreation areas.

There are a few specialist rooms on one of the sites, such as for woodwork and for ICT. There is a separate science room, but there is little useful equipment in this. As a result, whilst practical science lessons do take place, the range of these is limited.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school has an attractive prospectus which provides nearly all the information required for parents and placing authorities. It does not, however, tell parents about all the additional information the school holds which they can ask to see, such as a list of staff and their qualifications, details of examination results in the last year and the number of complaints the school may have received.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's policy and procedures meet requirements. There is a detailed policy document and an additional, short summary of the main points, which is helpful for parents and others.

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 provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- ensure that parents are aware that they can request particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations (paragraph 6(2)(i))
- ensure that parents are aware that they can request details of the complaints procedure adopted by the school, together with details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j))
- ensure that parents are aware that they can request details of the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 6(2)(k)).

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:

- refine assessment systems in order to review pupils' progress and targets more regularly and to develop more consistent approaches in all subjects
- improve resources for science and ICT.

School details

Name of school	Horton House School
DCSF number	810/6004
Unique reference number	133640
Type of school	Residential special school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties
Status	Independent
Date school opened	March 2002
Age range of pupils	8-16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Total: 17
Number of boarders	Total: 10
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Total: 17
Number of pupils who are looked after	Total: 10
Annual fees (day pupils)	£21,000 - £29,000
Annual fees (boarders)	£49,000 - £74,000 (38 weeks) £107,000 - £180,000 (52 weeks)
Address of school	Hill Top Farm Sutton Road Wawne Hull Kingston Upon Hull HU7 5YY
Telephone number	01482 875191
Fax number	01482 845950
Email address	hortonhouse1@hortonhouse1.karoo.co.uk
Headteacher	Mr Simon Hansel
Proprietor	Mrs Joan Appleby
Reporting inspector	Honoree Gordon HMI
Dates of inspection	2-3 October 2007