

Chase Academy International Study Centre

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	8606023
Unique Reference Number	131695
Inspection number	316900
Inspection dates	16-17 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael Thirkell AI

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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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 08456 404040

www.ofsted.gov.uk

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

Chase Academy International Study Centre is a part of Chase Academy which makes a distinctive provision for overseas students, most of whom come from Hong Kong and China. Situated in Cannock in Staffordshire, the school is registered to take students from the ages of 10 to 19 years. It currently provides places for 68 boys and girls between the ages of 12 and 19, most of whom are boarders. *'They come to be educated in an English boarding school, but in an environment where they can be taught in the style and at a speed relevant to them'*. Students start at the school at different ages, but most begin from the age of 14 or 15. They take classes to develop their understanding and use of English and integrate into classes with the school's main body of students dependent on their individual progress, motivation and aptitudes. The school's boarding provision was inspected by the Commission for Social Care Inspectorate (CSCI) in May 2006. This is the school's first published inspection report.

Evaluation of the school

Chase International Study centre is a good school which broadly meets its aims. It successfully provides a family atmosphere as well as the opportunity for students to make progress personally and academically. Students' progress in English language is particularly good. Teaching is good and the curriculum well matched to students' needs. Staff are committed to the welfare and safety of the students. The students are well cared for and provided with a suitable range of extra-curricular activities. The school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. Although the central focus is on developing students' literacy skills so they become proficient in their use of the English language as soon as possible, the school also covers the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education (RE). Some students study a modern foreign language. Provision for English as a foreign language is good and, depending on their initial ability and motivation, students are integrated into lessons in the main school when ready, with continuing language support according to individual need. They are encouraged to use subject-specific language quickly so they are able to follow a suitable programme through to GCSE and A Level. Curriculum planning is satisfactory overall, which

enables students to build steadily on their knowledge, skills and understanding. However, most subject schemes of work do not include enough information on how international students are to be supported in their language acquisition within mainstream classes.

Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE), taught through a programme called 'life skills', is good, and covers areas such as sex and relationships education, drugs awareness, smoking and alcohol abuse. Students in Year 10 have the opportunity to participate in work experience, gaining an understanding of working life in England. Careers education is supported by the local Connexions service, who provide guidance to students in Year 11 and the opportunity to practise interview techniques. Students in Year 12 visit a university open day so they can experience student life at first hand. The introduction of a personal tutor system for students in Year 12 provides them with helpful individual advice and guidance in their final two years at school.

The curriculum is supported well by a wide range of creative and sporting extra-curricular activities and international students are invited to put forward their suggestions on the activities they would like to undertake. Trips, visits and visitors regularly enrich school life; for example, when the Army visits to lead a team building weekend for Year 10 students. All Year 10 students take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

The quality of teaching is good and has a number of outstanding features. Subject teachers are generally well qualified and appropriately experienced. The school emphasises the need for teachers of specialist subjects to plan lessons that take into consideration the specific language needs of individual foreign students and lessons are most successful when this guidance is followed. The quality of teaching in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is a significant factor in the good progress made and supports students' progress to the next stage of their education. The most effective lessons use questioning as a means of engaging the attention of all students as well as providing a means of assessing their level of understanding or individuals' need for support. Training relating to teaching students with English as a second language has had variable impact. In some instances, communication techniques both oral and written, require more consideration; worksheets used and the organisation of activities do not always meet the students' learning needs.

The school has appropriate whole school policies for assessment and marking. Overall, the school's assessment strategies have a number of strong features. For example, the school maintains records of students' progress, including the development of their competency using English; tests are given and the results recorded regularly. Most students say that they are provided with feedback about their work from their teachers. Despite this, students' work shows that the school's guidelines for marking are not consistently followed. Written feedback on students' work sometimes provides insufficient information about its quality and, importantly, how it can be improved. Notes taken during lessons often show no sign of having

been checked for accuracy. Information provided for the students is occasionally not appropriately legible. Procedures for target setting have been introduced by the school to further support students' progress. However, targets set are currently too broad to be fully effective in guiding progress.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students from abroad enjoy their education, but some, particularly those most recently arrived, understandably miss their homes and parents. Students enjoy lessons most where they are effectively challenged and the pace is appropriate to their needs. The development of students' confidence and self-esteem is central to the aims of the school; praise and rewards are appropriately used. School colours are awarded to students for academic and sporting success and also for music, drama, service and leadership.

Behaviour in the school is outstanding. Students are encouraged to behave responsibly and they respond accordingly. The positive behaviour of students is supported by their generally good relationships with teachers and with one another. Their understanding of right and wrong is further developed through their 'life skills' course. A wide ranging citizenship course provides students with the opportunity to visit a Crown Court, take part in mock elections and discuss their social and moral responsibilities. They learn how to develop healthy lifestyles and are encouraged to participate in community service.

The school emphasises its Christian ethos and RE is taken by all younger students. Assemblies have a Christian character and during the inspection students were encouraged to reflect on the needs of others through the theme of world hunger. In an English lesson, students preparing for a drama activity reflected on a poem which encouraged them to be aware of the feelings of others. Students are effectively prepared for their future economic well-being by learning to speak English, through the helpful 'life skills' programme and through work experience. A range of activities in school provides them with the opportunity of working and socialising with others. They make contributions to their own community through organised school activities and to the wider community by collecting for charities. Students are provided with an appropriately wide range of opportunities to learn about English culture and traditions through, for example, visits to Cambridge and Birmingham art galleries.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is good. Staff are committed to ensuring the welfare of students; supervision is good. Students appreciate the care they receive. They say that incidents of bullying are extremely rare, and they are confident that the school would be positive and effective in its response to any incidents that occurred. Students feel valued and safe and they readily identify members of staff to whom they can turn should they have a problem. They are

encouraged to follow active, healthy lifestyles and to participate in a wide range of physical activities. The school offers nutritious meals, and students have a good choice of healthy options.

Appropriate policies are in place to safeguard students. Electrical equipment is regularly checked and thorough risk assessments are undertaken. Procedures for the administration of first aid are suitable and the policy offers comprehensive guidance to staff. However, whilst accidents are carefully recorded in most respects, details of when and where an accident occurred are not consistently included. The child protection policy gives clear guidance about recording and reporting disclosures and all staff have received appropriate training. Appropriate measures have been taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. Attendance registers are completed correctly, but the admissions register lacks the emergency telephone number of students' parents. The school meets its responsibilities with respect to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Clear and effective administrative procedures ensure that all staff employed by the school are appropriate persons to work with young people. Records are maintained correctly.

School's premises and accommodation

The school's spacious grounds are used well for recreational play and educational purposes. Good quality teaching rooms are provided for all curriculum areas, including recently refurbishing areas for music, art and design and technology. The library provision has recently been improved and its stock is in the process of being expanded to increase resources for international students. All rooms are in good decorative order and kept clean. The outstanding sports facilities include an on-site sports hall and access to high quality sports grounds nearby. Resources, including provision for information and communication technology, are good in most respects, although a few older students indicated they would like more books for particular subjects.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Communication between school and home is effective. Detailed and comprehensive information is available to parents in the handbook and, appropriately for parents abroad, on the school's website. They are kept well informed about the activities and events at the school. Regular visits to students' home countries by senior managers enable parents to find out about school issues and to check on their children's progress at first-hand. Reports on students' progress are satisfactory but too variable in their usefulness. Although there are examples of good practice, reports often give insufficient information about progress made in relation to a specific subject, or set insufficiently precise targets for further improvement.

Procedures for handling complaints

The procedures for handling complaints fully meet the requirements.

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 provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- maintain an accident book in the prescribed manner (paragraph 3(4))
- maintain an admissions register which contains all the prescribed details (paragraph 3(9))

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:

- develop assessment procedures and ensure that they are consistently implemented
- refine and improve the use of target setting to support students' progress
- provide training to support all subject teachers' understanding of the learning needs of the students
- ensure that school reports to parents are of a consistently good quality

School details

Name of school	Chase Academy International Study Centre		
DCSF number	860/6023		
Unique reference number	131695		
Type of school	Secondary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 2000		
Age range of pupils	12-19		
Gender of pupils	MI		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 47	Girls: 21	Total: 68
Number of boarders	Boys: 46	Girls: 21	Total: 67
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7464		
Annual fees (boarders)	£14,400		
Address of school	Lyncroft House St John's Road Cannock Staffordshire WS11 3UR		
Telephone number	01543 501800		
Fax number	01543 462893		
Email address	head@chaseacademy.com		
Headteacher	Mr David Holland		
Proprietor	Mr Mark Ellse		
Reporting inspector	Michael Thirkell AI		
Dates of inspection	16-17 October 2007		