

# Sheiling School

## Independent Special School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	835/6004
Unique Reference Number	113952
Inspection number	316955
Inspection dates	4-5 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Thomas Smith

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 (DCSF) about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school

Sheiling School is part of the Camphill movement, and was opened in 1951. The school, located near Ringwood provides education, based on the Steiner Waldorf principles, for up to 55 pupils and students aged from six to 19 years. Currently there are 43 pupils and students on roll of whom 38 live in houses situated around the campus; these were inspected by Ofsted (Care) in January 2007 and they received a good report. All pupils and students have moderate, severe or complex learning difficulties and each has a statement of special educational need. All are funded by their home authority. The school forms part of a wider community situated within 50 acres of grounds that are extensively used to support the activities of all residents. The school aims to create a community in which vulnerable children, with moderate, severe or complex learning difficulties, can learn and work with others in building relationships based on mutual care and respect. The pupils and students are divided into lower school and senior school. The latter is for pupils above the statutory school leaving age. The school was last inspected in 2002.

## Evaluation of the school

Sheiling School provides good quality education and care and successfully achieves its aim to offer an integrated provision that meets the complex needs of its pupils and students. The provision for older students is particularly effective. Teaching and learning is good and guided by the principles of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. Planning of the curriculum is a weakness and this means that continuity and progression in pupils' and students' learning cannot be assured. The school is justifiably well regarded by parents who have expressed appreciation of the work done on their children's behalf. The work undertaken by the staff impacts positively on the lives of the pupils; this is achieved through the combined effort of different professionals who work at the school. Since the last inspection the school has made satisfactory progress against the action points noted within that report. The school meets most of the regulations.

## Quality of education

The school provides a good quality of education that closely follows the guidance set out in the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. The provision is substantially enhanced through close links with the care curriculum. The impact of this is that each pupil and

student receives a holistic provision, which enhances their academic and personal development. However, the school has not articulated its curriculum through any published policy or plans. This means that continuity and progression in learning cannot be assured.

In the lower school pupils begin their daily learning through a main lesson that encompasses different aspects of the curriculum such as literacy, numeracy and humanities. These are taught as topics. This ninety minute session incorporates activities such as oral and written work, practice in basic skills, mental arithmetic, music, drawing and recall of previous work. The purpose of this approach is to engage pupils so that they can more readily identify with the subject matter. This is achieved mostly through experiential learning, which is used to connect pupils' feelings and responses.

Literacy and communication are appropriately emphasised within lessons. This is achieved through use of augmentative communication systems, such as the picture exchange communication system or Signalong signing. Where these are used consistently pupils engage more readily with their learning. Since the last inspection the school has made good progress in this aspect.

Older students in the post-16 years follow a curriculum that is designed to reflect their age and needs. It is appropriately different from that of the lower school. The provision for these students is particularly effective. As with their younger counterparts, their day is divided into distinct sessions, starting with the main lesson. These cross-curricular lessons are interwoven with other practical experiences during the remainder of the day. The quality of the provision is good. Students receive tuition in life skills that reflect their growing maturity and which prepare them for leaving school. For example, a Woman's Group within the school provided a course for students, which examined elements such as relationships, sexual health and dealing with different types of social interaction. Practical experiences rank high within this provision. For example, sessions in 'green woodwork' enable students to work with wood that has been gathered from the school's estate. They fashion this into artefacts or use it for other purposes, such as charcoal making.

Students in the senior school have personalised learning programmes that are suited well to their needs. Their personal development is a strong feature of the good progress they make. Despite this the school provides no opportunities for these students to be formally accredited for their effort.

The quality of teaching and assessment is generally good but some outstanding lessons were seen. Because of this pupils and students make good progress. There is however, a weakness in planning of the wider curriculum as well as lesson plans. There are no substantial schemes of work that might be used to secure the continuity and progression in learning. In part, the impact of this is moderated by the fact that pupils and students may remain with the same teachers for several years. The longer length of sessions is also aided by teachers' use of Steiner techniques,

which attempt to develop a rhythm in learning that seeks a balance between concepts such as concentration and relaxation, mental and practical work and movement and rest. Engagement with the activities is further enhanced through a regular change of activities.

Particular strengths within teaching are the positive relationships that staff form with their pupils and students. Staff are keenly aware of the need to develop the communication skills of pupils and they consistently encourage them to use these in making choices for themselves. Where pupils' or students' behaviour is challenging, staff manage this well. At all times the dignity of the pupils is preserved in any such encounters. More effective lessons are those where the objectives are made known to pupils at the outset and progressive steps are used to achieve these. Pupils are consistently reminded about what it is they have learned. Communication skills are securely developed and these are complemented through the advice of the school's speech and language therapist. These better lessons encourage pupils and students in their learning because teachers develop an ethos that gives confidence to pupils and students to explain what they know or do not understand. Teachers also know when to be quiet and allow their pupils appropriate time in which to think and formulate responses to questions.

In a few less effective lessons planning is inadequate. These lessons lacked direction and pace because the teacher had not considered the long time spent on each activity. Pupils then became bored and restless and their concentration waned.

Assessment of pupils is achieved by reference to P-levels. These are used consistently to identify attainment. However, the outcomes are not clearly linked to the educational objectives within the individual learning plans (ILP) because these objectives are often too broad and difficult to evidence. In many examples, the ILPs were inadequate because the objectives were too broad and could not readily be evidenced.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Throughout the school pupils and students are provided with many opportunities to reflect on and appreciate their surroundings. Staff are assiduous in promoting self-esteem among their pupils. Older students are guided to accept and respond to the consequences of their actions and given the opportunity to redress any harm done. The school provides supportive, additional therapies that enhance the personal development of pupils and students.

Effective liaison between the school and house staff considerably enhances the opportunities for pupils and students to enjoy and achieve in their work and also to form positive relationships. There is a strong culture that promotes good behaviour and attitudes to work. Pupils and students work enthusiastically in their lessons as well as in tasks, such as grounds maintenance.

The school provides many opportunities for pupils and students to contribute positively to the community. For example, they undertake simple tasks, such as clearing away after meals or more complex jobs, such as selecting and delivering morning newspapers to each of the residences.

Cultural development is promoted well through the curriculum and this enables pupils and students to react positively to the world in which they live. The school makes good provision for pupils to become aware of and understand the infrastructure of their local community. The international character of the staff is also used to develop pupils' understanding of other cultures. For example, Japanese staff have provided experiences for pupils that inform them about Japanese life and customs. Other overseas staff have provided similar experiences.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is good and makes a positive impact on the personal development of pupils and students. Issues of safeguarding are a high priority for the whole community and so pupils and students live in a caring and safe environment. The curriculum provides information and instruction about sexual health and the dangers of substance abuse. Despite this the school has not updated its policies relating to anti-bullying measures and visits to places away from the school.

The deployment of staff ensures that pupils and students are supervised and safe at all times and they know that there is an adult to whom they might turn in the event they feel distressed. This supervision is moderated for older students who are encouraged to develop their own independence. Despite the strong feeling of community there is no student representative body; their voice in community affairs goes largely unrecorded.

The school provides good opportunities for pupils and students to understand the need to stay safe. This is encouraged initially within the curriculum but is also developed through other opportunities, such as visits to facilities within the local area. Healthy choices at meals are provided and these too provide additional opportunities for pupils and students to exercise their right of choice.

The school has given some consideration to the Disability Discrimination Act (2002) and has already included adaptations to buildings as these are renovated. However, it does not yet have an accessibility plan that it will implement over three years. The school fully understands the issues and intends to respond to these.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school carries out thorough checks that ensure all staff employed at the school are suitable to work with children. It has implemented the requirement for a single central register of all staff.

## School's premises and accommodation

The school forms part of an extensive campus of some 50 acres. The accommodation for younger pupils is appropriately separate from that of older students and each group follows its own distinct activities. Classrooms are maintained well and provide generous space that fully supports pupils' learning. However, the washroom accommodation in Albion Hall is inadequate. Specialist facilities include a therapy suite that supports elements of Steiner education, such as eurhythm, as well as a range of other therapies. Other facilities include a swimming pool, theatre, activity hall, craft workshops and quiet rooms. The grounds, as well as the local community are used extensively and effectively to enrich the learning undertaken by pupils and students.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school is in the process of updating its prospectus. In conjunction with its web site this provides much of the information that parents and others would seek. However, neither of these sources fully informs parents and others about the type of curriculum provided by the school or the particulars of policies available on request. Annual reports of the progress made by pupils and students are provided to parents. The quality of these varies and few provide evidence of the learning and progress that pupils and students achieve.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a clear and fair complaints policy that meets 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 the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- provide a written curriculum policy and implement this with effective schemes of work that ensure continuity and progression in learning (paragraph 1(2))
- put in place a framework by which pupil performance can be evaluated by reference to either the school's own aims, as provided to parents and/or, by national norms (paragraph 1(4)).

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

- prepare and implement an anti-bullying policy that reflects DCSF guidance (paragraph 3(2)(a))
- prepare and implement a policy that pays regard to current DCSF guidance, and which ensures the safety of pupils when undertaking activities away from the school (paragraph 3(2)(c)).

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

- provide appropriate washroom facilities for staff and pupils in Albion Hall (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:

- ensure that parents are aware they can request particulars of the curriculum offered by the school (paragraph 6(2)(g))
- ensure that parents are aware they can request particulars of policies relating to bullying, child protection, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, and sanctions adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving (paragraph 6(2)(h)).

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	Sheiling School		
DCSF number	835/6004		
Unique reference number	113952		
Type of school	Special for pupils with severe learning difficulties		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1951		
Age range of pupils	6-19		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys:32	Girls:11	Total:43
Number of boarders	Boys:29	Girls:9	Total:38
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys:32	Girls:11	Total:43
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys:13	Girls:3	Total:16
Annual fees (day pupils)	£20,580 - £26,340		
Annual fees (boarders)	£45,330 - £70,029		
Address of school	Horton Road Ashley Ringwood Hampshire BH24 2EB		
Telephone number	01425 477488		
Fax number	01425 479536		
Email address	david.morley@sheilingschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr David Morley		
Proprietor	Sheiling Trust		
Reporting inspector	Thomas Smith		
Dates of inspection	4-5 October 2007		