

Northeast Manor School

Independent Special School

Inspection report

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| DfES Registration Number | 845/6028 |
| Unique Reference Number | 114645 |
| Inspection number | 317161 |
| Inspection dates | 11-12 July 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Ian Naylor 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).

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

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

Northease Manor is a co-educational day and weekly boarding independent special school for the education of potentially able pupils who have a range of specific learning difficulties including dyslexia, dyspraxia or dyscalculia. The majority of pupils have experienced significant difficulties or failure in their previous educational placement; some have become school refusers. Pupils are of average or above average ability. There is an approximate ratio of one girl to every ten boys. Pupils come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. Approximately half of the pupils are boarders. The school is a charitable trust. Approximately 70% of the pupils are funded by Local Authorities. There are ten class groups. Pursuit of excellence is a key aim of the school's philosophy.

Evaluation of the school

Northease Manor is an excellent school that provides a very relevant and very high quality of education for its pupils. The leadership of the curriculum and the quality of education is exemplary. There is an outstanding curriculum that matches the individual needs of pupils and promotes their self-esteem, confidence and skills of independence. Teaching is of a good quality. This means that pupils achieve outstanding success in a range of skills, knowledge and understanding that prepare them very well for their future. The school provides outstanding value for money.

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding. It is tailored to the individual needs of pupils and offers a range of well planned activities to support their learning. Excellent opportunities are provided for pupils to participate in a wide range of GCSE and Entry Level courses. An exceptionally high quality of provision for literacy and numeracy gives particular emphasis to supporting pupils with dyslexia and other learning difficulties and disabilities. A very good multi-sensory approach to learning stems from excellent support by specialist speech and language and occupational therapists. Class sizes are small and much of the teaching is on an individual or small group basis. This ensures that each pupil has the best possible attention to their individual learning needs. There is also very good provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE), for art, technology, physical education (PE), information and communication technology (ICT) and drama. Provision in the other subjects is

good. Pupils' economic awareness is especially well promoted by the acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills. It is also well supported by work-related learning, work experience and careers education in conjunction with the Connection careers adviser. Pupils are helped to become fit and healthy through the wide range of physical activities, including sports and swimming. There is enrichment through a wide variety of supporting activities, visits out of school, visitors and specialist teachers. The boarding facilities provide very good opportunities to extend learning throughout the day both for boarders and with access to after school activities by day pupils.

The curriculum is particularly well managed by the senior management team and heads of lower, middle and upper departments. Planning is clear and comprehensive and continually under review to ensure a high quality of provision is delivered to pupils. Parents report that they are highly satisfied with the way in which the curriculum offers opportunities for their child to grow in their personal development.

Teaching is good overall. Often it is outstanding. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactorily monitored by senior staff. There is a comprehensive range of continuous professional development offered to teachers. This increases their teaching skills and confidence in meeting pupils' individual needs. However, a more robust system for monitoring lessons would improve the consistency of teaching across the subjects and departments. In the most effective lessons teachers understand the needs of pupils particularly well. They make use of individual education plans and assessments when planning activities. Subject knowledge is excellent and well applied. Teachers have high expectations of cooperation and effort from pupils and use the school's behaviour management and grading system effectively. In this way they motivate pupils to learn and minimise the potential for disruption if pupils feel frustrated or unsuccessful. Teachers develop excellent relationships with pupils and this helps to inspire pupils' confidence in their own abilities and strengthens their self-esteem. Teachers work in close collaboration with the speech and language therapist and occupational therapist. This helps to ensure that pupils enjoy the best opportunities to overcome their specific learning difficulties. Teaching assistants give good support to pupils' learning in most lessons. However, their skills and talents are not always used to best effect because teachers' planning is not specific enough about how they should contribute to supporting individual pupils' needs. A common lay out for teachers' planning is not in use and so it is not as easy as it could be to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. In the very few less successful lessons relationships are not as strong and an element of weaker behaviour management prevents pupils from concentrating fully on their learning and this affects their performance.

There is a very thorough system for assessment across the school. Staff have extensive knowledge of pupils' learning and emotional needs. Detailed records are kept of pupils' performances in reading, spelling and numeracy as well as of their progress in each of the subjects. Data from these records is collected and analysed to inform future planning for teaching. Individual education plans are kept up to date

and are valuable tools in transforming the assessment process into learning objectives for each pupil. Targets are set for each pupil in literacy, numeracy and social skills. Pupils know what their targets are and work hard to meet them.

The progress that pupils make is outstanding. Pupils clearly enjoy their lessons and are very proud of their achievements and successes. They achieve significant success across a range of academic and social activities. They make huge gains in their literacy and numeracy skills, often from very low starting points from when they first start at the school. Above all, pupils enjoy enormous success in raising their levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. There has been year on year improvements in the GCSE grades across the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Most pupils achieve at least 5 grades at GCSE or Entry level. There are significant differences in cohorts each year which can have an effect upon results. The school works hard to adjust for these and through effective teaching and a strong curriculum to sustain and improve pupil's individual levels of performance.

English is one of the hardest subjects for most pupils because of their learning needs. There is consequently a more variable number of pupils who gain five Grade C or above at GCSE. 2006 was a less successful year, whereas 2007 predicted grades are much higher. School records show that all pupils make very significant progress in their reading and spelling ages during the time they are at the school which indicates a significant value added performance for pupils as a consequence of the excellent curriculum and good teaching. Overall, pupils achieve good success in their literacy skills.

There is outstanding progress made in mathematics, art, technology, dance and drama, with above the national average yearly increases in the number gaining five Grades C or above at GCSE. An exceptionally high standard is achieved in course work for both art and technology. This was put on display for parents prior to Year 11 leaving school and many reported how delighted and amazed they are at the high quality of pupils' work on display. Pupils also make very good progress in PE, especially in swimming and this supports personal development very well. Pupils have excellent success in their personal development through PSHE and other learning opportunities made available to them. There are numerous examples of pupils achieving remarkable success after leaving school in further and higher education and in business and commerce. Pupils are encouraged to join local organisations that promote their skills of independence and confidence, their organisation skills and leadership. This gives them good opportunities to become aware of and support their local community. At the end of Year 11 all pupils move successfully into further education, work-based training or higher education.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision is outstanding. A real strength of the school is its ability to develop the self-esteem, self-confidence and self-knowledge of its pupils who first arrive at the school having experienced failure and disillusionment elsewhere. Behaviour is good. It can

be challenging, particularly among the younger students, which reflects frustrations they have suffered in earlier schooling. However, as they start to experience success they generally respond well to the positive behaviour and reward system that is in place and witnessed at the weekly rewards assembly. Pupils form close relationships with their form tutor and, for boarders, the Head of Care and house parents. They also benefit from the services of very experienced counsellors and a speech and language therapist who complement the work of teachers.

Pupils develop a sense of right and wrong. An appreciation of their own and other cultures is fostered through the programme of assemblies and through the wider curriculum. The PSHE curriculum is good throughout the school, especially so in the upper school.

Pupils generally enjoy their education and are able to experience success. Practical subjects, such as art and technology, allow many to show considerable talent. The use of language across the curriculum supports pupils in overcoming their difficulties in learning and to experience success, often for the first time. Facilities for recreation are good and a range of activities on and off-site take place at the end of the school day for boarding pupils. Attendance is slightly above the national average.

There is good preparation for future economic well being, including the provision of work experience for pupils in Year 10. There are good links with the Connexions service. Practical skills, such as the ability to use technology and computers, are developed. Year 11 pupils have mock interviews with local business people in preparation for college or employment applications.

Pupils are encouraged to make a positive contribution. This is reflected in activities locally as well as in the raising of money for charities, such as the middle school contribution to support the rebuilding of monsoon ravaged communities in southern India through a charity collection.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is outstanding. All staff receive child protection training as part of their induction and the published policy is detailed, containing practical advice. Relevant background checks are made prior to the appointment of any new staff. Bullying is not tolerated and the DfES guidance is reflected in school policy. Risk assessments and health and safety aspects of the school are within the responsibilities of the bursar. Duties are carried out rigorously in line with DfES guidance. Staff are deployed to provide effective supervision, including the hand over of pupils from care to education staff and vice-versa. Serious disciplinary offences are recorded in a book kept for the purpose, though behaviour and pupils' attitudes to school and to each other are generally very positive. Importantly, the pupils say that they feel safe in school.

First aid provision is good and the school has a matron who looks after health

matters during the day, including the dispensing of medication which is properly recorded and checked on a weekly basis. Commission for Social Care Inspectorate reports on the boarding facilities are good and procedures for registering admission and attendance are fully in place. The school complies with its duties regarding access contained in the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

As a partly residential community, the coming together for meals is an important aspect of school life. Efforts to promote a healthy lifestyle and diet are encouraged, including developing a healthier range of food and drinks available at the tuck shop.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school meets all the required regulations. There are very robust procedures for making the necessary checks on staffing appointments, including those of the Criminal Records Bureau. There is a single central record, which is kept with all the required information on staffing.

School's premises and accommodation

The buildings and grounds are maintained to a good standard and security is adequate. They make a very pleasant environment for living and learning. The school makes good use of its historically interesting listed buildings and it is good to see modern technology used beneath Tudor beams. Classrooms are of a reasonable size. They are well maintained and equipped. Emergency evacuations can be accomplished safely. There is good provision for pupils who are sick, including the employment of a matron. Meals are served in the Tudor Barn. This is seen as an important element of community life at the school and regulations for the preparation, serving and consumption of food are all met. The most recent CSCI report is very positive about the premises and accommodation of the school.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The prospectus makes clear to parents, carers and others the aims of the school and meets all requirements. Regular reports are prepared for parents and carers about the academic, emotional and social development of pupils. There are regular newsletters and parent workshops. The school has its own website. All these help to promote very good communication with and information for parents. Annual reviews of statements of special educational need are conducted in an appropriate manner and involve parents, carers and the pupils themselves. These include an annual report of the pupil's progress in all aspects of their education. All policies and statements about the curriculum, discipline and exclusions are available on request.

Procedures for handling complaints

Procedures for handling complaints at both the formal and informal stages are fully

in place. The school complies fully with the appropriate regulations, including those pertaining to boarding schools. The published policy is sent out as a document included with the school brochure for parents. The school takes complaints made by pupils seriously, logging them together with details of investigation and outcome, in a specially maintained book.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

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:

- make better use of teaching assistants' time by planning for their involvement in lessons.
- create a common format for lesson planning to assist in the monitoring of teaching and learning.
- develop a more robust system for monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning.

School details

| | | | |
|---|--|----------|-----------|
| Name of school | Northease Manor School | | |
| DfES number | 845/6028 | | |
| Unique reference number | 114645 | | |
| Type of school | Residential special | | |
| Status | Independent | | |
| Age range of pupils | 10-17 | | |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | | |
| Number on roll (full-time pupils) | Boys: 73 | Girls: 7 | Total: 80 |
| Number of boarders | Boys: 32 | Girls: 5 | Total: 37 |
| Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need | Boys: 56 | Girls: 8 | Total: 64 |
| Number of pupils who are looked after | Boys: 1 | Girls: 0 | Total: 1 |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £17,720 | | |
| Annual fees (boarders) | £24,233 | | |
| Address of school | Rodmell Lewes East Sussex BN7 3EY | | |
| Telephone number | 01273472915 | | |
| Fax number | 01273472202 | | |
| Email address | headmaster@northease.co.uk | | |
| Headteacher | Mr Paul Stanley | | |
| Reporting inspector | Ian Naylor AI | | |
| Dates of inspection | 11-12 July 2007 | | |