

Halton School

Independent Special School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	876/6000
Unique Reference Number	133485
Inspection number	317814
Inspection dates	9-10 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Sheila Ann Boyle 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).

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.

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

Halton School caters for boys and girls aged 7 to 14 years. The majority of pupils who attend the school are residents at Keys Childcare Service's homes, one of which is on the same site as the school. A smaller number of pupils attend from local foster homes, some of whom are looked after children. There are 13 pupils currently on roll 10 boys and 3 girls. All are funded by local authorities from across England. The pupils have emotional, behavioural and social disorders and all but one have a statement of special educational need. The school aims to provide its pupils with an education that enables them to achieve their full potential and acquire the knowledge skills and understanding relevant for the next stage of learning. This is the school's second inspection; the first took place in January 2004.

Evaluation of the school

The school provides its pupils with good education and care. This confirms the school's self-evaluation and the findings of the first inspection. Relationships between staff and pupils throughout the school are extremely caring and supportive and pupils enjoy coming to school. The teaching, pupils' learning and their progress are good, and the emphasis on literacy and numeracy has resulted in consistently good outcomes in these curriculum areas. Pupils achieve well and are suitably prepared for the next stage of their education. Provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and this is reflected in pupils' politeness, good behaviour, tolerance of others and their warm welcome for visitors. The school's strengths lie in the way it places the welfare, health, safety and social development of pupils at the heart of all its work. Parents and carers feel that their children are safe and well cared for. The school successfully meets its aims and all of the regulations. Further improvements have been made since the last inspection.

Quality of education

The school provides a good quality of education. It has a clear and detailed curriculum policy enhanced by individual subject policies and supported by a comprehensive assessment policy. Schemes of work are suitably adapted to meet the needs of all pupils, and as a result they make good progress, particularly in basic skills. At the heart of the good curriculum is the development of each pupil's social skills and the promotion of confidence and self-esteem. A programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) is carefully woven through the timetable and

includes lessons in citizenship and careers education. This programme contributes well to pupils' personal development and future economic well-being. Lessons in French have been introduced since the last inspection and information and communication technology is used increasingly to promote learning in all other subjects. A good range of educational trips and extra curricular activities, including sports clubs extend pupils' physical and social skills and help improve their confidence and self-esteem.

Teaching is good and ensures that pupils regularly achieve the targets set in their individual education plans. Systems for assessing and recording pupils' achievement are well established and effectively used for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, although, in other subjects, only informal assessment takes place. Marking is satisfactory in all subjects and helps pupils to improve future work. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and pupils benefit from teaching by subject specialists in design technology, art, music and physical education. In most lessons teachers use a range of strategies to engage pupils, including humour to motivate them and sustain their concentration. Pupils respond well, generating a purposeful learning atmosphere that results in good progress during the lesson. Very good teaching of reading skills including phonics and word-building strategies were seen in the primary department. Teaching assistants all have good expertise and make a valuable contribution to teaching and learning.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The personal development and well-being of pupils including spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good overall. Although spiritual development is interwoven through many elements of the school's work, planning for its development is not sufficiently explicit. The development of pupils' personal and social skills is effective throughout the school because of clear routines and very warm supportive relationships. Pupils' behaviour is good and there is a high degree of tolerance and racial harmony through out the school.

Attendance is good, pupils like coming to school. Breakfast clubs and lunch times provide good opportunities for developing a community spirit and promoting awareness of keeping safe and making healthy choices. Moral development is promoted effectively and staff provide good opportunities for pupils to consider moral issues. For example, in an English lesson the older pupils considered the positive and negative impact of punishment, whether harsh punishment could be justified and whether it ever achieves the desired outcome. The school council is used well to ensure pupils' views are sought. This helps to develop each pupil's confidence and self-esteem as they feel their views are listened to.

Cultural development is promoted well through subjects like English, history, art and food technology. In art, for example, pupils have been studying Aboriginal art and culture, and in history, pupils have learnt about The Great Fire of London and Guy Fawkes. In citizenship lessons older pupils have interviewed their local Member of

Parliament on issues such as political parties and elections. Pupils have good opportunities to engage with the local and wider community. Some attend the Girl Guides and Cubs clubs in the evenings. Each year pupils attend the make-up department of a local college to be 'made up' for Halloween and Christmas productions, which they put on for visitors.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for ensuring the welfare, health and safety of pupils is good. Staff know pupils very well and their care and well-being are given high priority at all times. Pupils said that they feel safe, well cared for and enjoy coming to school. Child protection and health and safety procedures are well managed and understood by all staff. The school has effective systems for managing behaviour which are consistently implemented by staff and the pupils respond well to them. In lessons such as PSHE, science and food technology, pupils are taught the benefits of staying safe and eating healthy diets. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (2002).

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All staff who work in the school and have direct contact with pupils have been checked with the Criminal Records Bureau to ensure their suitability to work with children. The school maintains a complete single central record and follows thorough recruitment procedures including the required checks on staff before their appointment is confirmed. Its procedures meet the regulations.

School's premises and accommodation

Premises and accommodation are of a satisfactory standard and are safe and secure. The classrooms are small, and well organised to maximise the available space. Classrooms and corridors are brightly decorated and have attractive displays of pupils' work. The rooms are well-resourced, enhancing learning opportunities for the pupils.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school has good procedures for communicating with parents and others. The prospectus for parents provides appropriate and useful information, including information about the curriculum and the school's ethos. The daily communication sheets between home and school ensure that parents and carers work in partnership with the school, particularly on issues such as behaviour and the completion of homework. Progress reports of satisfactory quality are sent to parents annually and open days are held twice yearly to inform them about their child's attainment and progress. All parents and carers who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that their children are happy in school and they are comfortable in approaching the school to resolve any issues.

Procedures for handling complaints

The complaints procedures are clearly set out and fully meet the regulations.

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:

- extend systems of assessment and recording of achievement to all the subjects taught
- provide more explicit details of how spiritual development is promoted.

School details

Name of school	Halton School		
DCSF number	876/6000		
Unique reference number	133485		
Type of school	Special; for pupils with emotional, behavioural and social disorders		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	11 Sept 2000		
Age range of pupils	7-14		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 10	Girls: 3	Total: 13
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 9	Girls: 3	Total: 12
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 7	Girls: 1	Total: 8
Annual fees (day pupils)	£32,000		
Address of school	31 Main Street Halton Runcorn Cheshire WA7 2AN		
Telephone number	01928 589810		
Fax number	01928 589810		
Email address	kelleyfray@bettercare.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Mark McQuillan		
Proprietor	Keys Childcare Ltd.		
Reporting inspector	Sheila Ann Boyle AI		
Dates of inspection	9-10 October 2007		