

# The Small School

## Independent School

### Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	878/6036
Unique Reference Number	113611
Inspection number	320395
Inspection dates	24–25 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended.

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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, the purpose of which is 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

The Small School is a co-educational, non-selective, independent school for pupils aged 11 to 16 years of age. There are currently 19 students on roll. The school accepts those who have a statement of special educational need. It was opened in 1982 by a parent co-operative who wished to provide a school offering a 'human scale education'. The school is held in former chapel premises in Hartland, North Devon. This is the first inspection of the school under Section 162A of the Education Act 2005. After a period of considerable change in staffing a number of new teachers, including the head teacher, joined the school this term.

The aim of the school is *'to produce qualified, creative and self-confident young people with an enduring appetite for learning and a respect for others and their environment'*.

## Evaluation of the school

The Small School is a distinctive school, which provides a satisfactory quality of education and has had significant success in enabling its students to engage in learning and increase in confidence. Students are happy and enjoy coming to school and, as one commented, *'we are all friends here.'* Students benefit from small group teaching, which provides well for their individual needs, enabling them to make satisfactory or better progress through a varied curriculum. There are a number of regulations the school does not meet.

## Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets the individual needs of the students. During the mornings a range of National Curriculum subjects is taught, which include English, mathematics, Latin, Classics, science, Spanish, art, humanities and history. Each afternoon a wider range of subjects are offered to students, who have the opportunity to choose three each term. Currently these include information and communication technology, media studies, drawing, art, woodwork, horticulture, film, music, photography, climbing, pottery, music, including instrumental tuition, and production of the 'Small Talk' magazine. All students have weekly games. Older students study a sufficient number of GCSE subjects and achieve commendable results, especially in art and photography. The majority of students go on to further education and are given good support in choosing appropriate courses. The school

has started to review its curriculum documentation, as links between subjects are underdeveloped. Students who need additional help are supported well. There is appropriate support for students who have a statement of special educational need. A range of visits outside school, including local and residential visits, further enhances the curriculum.

The teaching and assessment are satisfactory. The school has many good features, for example it has had considerable success with some of the students who have not thrived at other schools and are now experiencing success, interacting well with their peers. Relationships are good at all levels with an atmosphere of mutual respect between adults and students. The working atmosphere in lessons is generally positive, with students willing to offer opinions, confident that the staff will be supportive and listen to them. The relaxed culture at the school can lead to a lack of pace in some lessons. The students' behaviour is generally good; they offer opinions readily and take part in discussions in the 'Circle' and in lessons. The inspection took place very early in the school year and although most staff plan their lessons carefully it is early in the term and the new staff, even though they are getting to know the students rapidly, have limited information on their prior attainments or previous learning. This lack of assessment information is not helpful to staff in the planning of future lessons. The students are mostly eager to learn and have a natural curiosity, which is fostered by the staff and the ethos of the school. Overall, students make satisfactory and, in some cases, better progress in their GCSE courses. The staff keep files of the students' work and, as there is a small number, know their capabilities well, however, there is no systematic method of recording students' attainment and progress. Resources are adequate and are used effectively.

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

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. The school's strong emphasis on treating students as individuals is evident in the way it successfully promotes their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence by carefully tailoring the curriculum to match their interests and needs. Attendance and behaviour are generally good and students develop a clear understanding of right and wrong. They accept responsibility readily by acting as school counsellors, mentors for their peers and classroom assistants. They also tend the hens enthusiastically and help with cooking and cleaning. Moral and social issues are addressed successfully through aspects of the curriculum such as personal, social and health education and citizenship, together with opportunities for discussions in the small class groups. Respect for the law and understanding of the public institutions and services in England are addressed through good opportunities for learning about local government policies and democracy. Students are suitably prepared for their future economic well-being and also understand the need for teamwork, harmony and toleration. They readily contribute to the wider community through organising events to raise funds for charities, helping with the local Farmers' Market, and taking part in local community events. Cultural education is developed effectively through both the study of and visits to other countries. The school does

its best to help students to be aware of multicultural aspects of modern life, by making educational visits to Europe, ensuring an introduction to other cultures.

## Welfare, health and safety of the students

The school makes satisfactory provision for the welfare, health and safety of the students. It has devised and implemented effectively a range of policies which include anti-bullying, educational visits and child protection. However, one new member of staff has not yet trained in safeguarding issues to meet the latest guidance. The school is vigilant about fire safety and staff are trained as fire monitors. A detailed fire and safety risk assessment has been conducted on the premises. The students are allowed off the school site, with parental permission, at lunchtimes but the school does not keep any suitable records. Students are encouraged to eat healthily and enjoy the wholesome vegetarian lunch and take regular exercise. There are several trained first aiders but the first aid policy contains only general information and lacks information on specific procedures. The attendance and admission registers meet the regulations. The school has not yet fulfilled its duties with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 as it has not drawn up a three-year accessibility plan.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has checked all staff to ensure their suitability to work with children and holds the information on a single central register. However, the staff appointment procedures do not include a check on their medical fitness.

## School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are generally suitable to ensure effective learning. The buildings are cleaned and maintained by the students and parents. There is adequate heating and most areas of the school are tidy, but some areas are in still in need of decoration and maintenance; some areas of flooring are in need of renewal and a handrail is required on two staircases. The outdoor area is on several levels, with a large grassed and garden area. There are sufficient toilets for staff and students but they have no hot water available. The school does not have appropriate facilities for students who may be ill.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides parents and carers with a good range of information through an informative leaflet, handbook and newsletters. The parents are not given sufficient information on admission, discipline and exclusion procedures or about students who may be admitted with a statement of special educational need. The parents receive a written report on their children's progress each year and have the opportunity to attend a consultation meeting. Many parents are actively involved in the school with a variety of tasks. Most of the parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and were very supportive of the school. They are pleased with the education their

children receive with one commenting that the students have a '*well-rounded global education focusing on the whole child*'. However, many were concerned about the high staff turnover and some felt that they were not kept sufficiently informed about their children's' progress.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a set of procedures, which meet the regulations.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ("the Regulations"), with the exception of those listed below:

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- ensure that new staff have information on students' prior learning and attainment (paragraph 1(3)(d))
- review assessment procedures and use the information to plan teaching (paragraph 1(3)(g)).

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

- ensure that a member of staff is trained in safeguarding procedures to meet the latest DCSF guidance (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- provide more detail in the first aid policy (paragraph 3(6))
- ensure that students are adequately supervised at all times (paragraph 3(7)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, carry out a health check (paragraph 4(2)(a)).

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

- provide hot water in the washbasins (paragraph 5(a))
- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l))

- provide appropriate flooring in good condition (paragraph 5(s))
- ensure that students are sufficiently supervised when playing outside (paragraph 5(t)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- provide parents with particulars of the school's policy for admissions, discipline and exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e))
- provide parents with particulars of educational and welfare provision for students with statements of special educational need (paragraph 6(2)(f)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

# Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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## The quality of education

Overall quality of education			✓	
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils			✓	
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs			✓	
How well pupils make progress in their learning			✓	

## Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

## Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils			✓	
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## School details

Name of school	The Small School		
DCSF number	878/6036		
Unique reference number	113611		
Type of school	Secondary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1982		
Age range of pupils	11-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll	Boys: 13	Girls: 6	Total: 19
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees	£900 minimum parental contribution		
Address of school	Fore Street Hartland Bideford Devon EX39 6AB		
Telephone number	01237 441672		
Email address	Smallschoolhartland@yahoo.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr S Rix		
Proprietor	Trustees of The Small School		
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton		
Dates of inspection	24–25 September 2008		