

# Roaches School

Independent Special School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	860/6017
Unique Reference Number	124495
Inspection number	320756
Inspection dates	6-7 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Robert Drew

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

## Information about the school

The Roaches Independent School is a residential special school for young people with significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Students aged 7 to 16 are referred to the school by local authorities across the country. Currently, 31 are on roll, with 15 boarding and 16 day students. Most have a history of temporary or permanent exclusion from school and many are in the care of social services. They exhibit low self-esteem and can be seriously withdrawn or isolated with immature social skills or personality disorders. The school has two main sites, with an upper and lower school, where it seeks to provide intensive support and stimulation in a secure environment. An annexe, or third site, is used for specialist technology provision. The school opened in 1998, was registered in March 2000 and was last inspected on 6 March 2002.

## Evaluation of the school

The school provides a good quality education and has areas of outstanding provision. Students' academic progress is good, reflecting the success of teaching and the effective use of assessment. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is equally good because the quality of care is consistently high. Whether in lessons, in therapy sessions or in school life in general, students are respected by the staff and their confidence and skills are successfully built up. The school meets most of the regulations.

### Quality of education

The school provides a good curriculum overall and makes outstanding provision in the lower school. The youngest students receive an excellent balance of imaginative literacy and numeracy lessons consolidated by very thorough support work on weaknesses in academic or personal skills. In addition, therapies, a strength in the school as a whole, are particularly well developed at the lower school site, with music and outdoor activities based here. Similarly, teaching and assessment, while good for the school as a whole, are excellent at the lower school site. Lessons are very well structured with rapid pace and maximum involvement by students. Assessment is integral to teaching and learning so that both staff and students know what is being aimed for and how they should develop to reach targets. Within this carefully designed framework, teaching is dynamic, enjoyment levels are high and students

are remarkably well motivated. Academic progress is very good, but is possibly exceeded by the excellent social and personal gains made by students. Many are able to reintegrate quickly into mainstream schooling.

In the upper school, the curriculum is satisfactory overall, but has a growing number of strengths. The range of courses is wide and GCSE is gaining greater prominence in Key Stage 4. The school has sought to appoint more subject specialists in order to build up the quality of its work with some success. Excellent schemes of work and very effective teaching were seen in art and technology, for example. In mathematics and information and communication technology expertise has yet to spread fully: some teaching is constrained by the more limited skills of non-specialists. Additional support for basic literacy and numeracy is also developing and produces startling improvements where it is in place. The school sees the value of increasing the expertise and number of staff giving this support and wisely plans to give more emphasis to numeracy in Key Stage 3. Teaching in the upper school is good overall, embracing both good and excellent practice and some that is satisfactory. The satisfactory teaching lacks the clear structure and rapid pace seen in the best lessons and generally makes adequate rather than good use of assessment.

A real strength of the provision across the school is its therapeutic work. All students are able to participate in play, music and art therapy. Outdoor education provides similar opportunities. Together, these elements command a significant part of the weekly timetable. Their impact on the students' self-esteem, social skills and enjoyment is outstanding. In some cases it is quite transformational for instance, victims of bullying who were previously unwilling to join in school life have triumphed at abseiling and subsequently seen themselves in an entirely new light. Music offers another avenue for discovering new skills and real satisfaction in performing together on a regular basis.

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

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They generally come to the school lacking self-esteem and confidence, but leave far stronger. Their ability to reflect on their own lives and the needs of others is good because staff constantly reinforce these perspectives. Students learn to identify their own successes and the school makes much of celebrating these. Music, art and outdoor activities play a special role in helping them discover beauty, enjoyment and respect for the world around them. Their moral and social awareness is good, largely because staff apply policies of rewards and sanctions consistently. In many lessons, students see staff clearly demonstrating how to act openly, fairly and maturely and students adopt these traits. Behaviour is good. Where students lack sufficient self-discipline, staff manage students well. Good progress is made in learning to understand others' points of view, something many students found difficult in the past. They now work well in pairs and groups.

They contribute well to the school by serving on the school council and getting involved in music and drama productions. Students enjoy school and this is demonstrated in their good attendance. They learn well about each other's cultures and faiths through activities such as making food from different countries, assemblies and the celebration of festivals. They get along amicably with others from different cultures and faiths. Students learn to recognise key people from public services and institutions through visits and visitors to the school. For example, a police constable is on the board of governors and provides students with a positive contact with the police. Students use the local community well to support aspects of their learning, such as purchasing animal feed for the stock they rear, and are thinking of ways they can raise money for charitable causes. Older students have participated in charitable events. Community relationships and responsibilities are regularly discussed in assemblies and students can earn rewards to enjoy a meal out in the locality.

## Welfare, health and safety of the students

Care for students is good. The great majority say that they feel safe at the school and their behaviour indicates that they are far more secure than in previous settings. Staff treat them with care and respect. Policies ensure that health and safety issues are fully considered and that risk assessment is effective. As a result, quite ambitious provision is made for challenging outdoor activities, which boost self-esteem and confidence, with the assurance that safety will not be compromised. The college meets the regulations for safeguarding children and fire safety is good. Bullying is very rare: a significant proportion of students express the view that the school is in fact the first school where they have been free from bullying. However, the school's anti-bullying policy does not take full account of the most recent guidance from the Department for Children, Schools and Families. The school's behaviour and rewards policies are clear and staff implement them consistently. The school promotes healthy eating well and makes very good use of the countryside around the lower school for outdoor activity. The school fulfils its responsibilities in relation to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The proprietor makes thorough checks on the suitability of staff. Statutory requirements are fully met. A single central register is maintained.

## College's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are well maintained, safe and promote effective learning. The school has particularly attractive premises at its lower school site. Residential accommodation is good on both sites. The annexe provides good specialist design and technology accommodation. There are suitably sized and adequately furnished teaching rooms, some of which have excellent displays. There

is good outdoor recreational space on both school sites and the lower school has safe and frequent access to the adjacent moorland for outdoor activities.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Carers and parents are kept well informed about students' progress. Regular reports and reviews offer very extensive detail about strengths and weaknesses in their academic and personal progress. It is made clear how students can improve further.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school's procedures for dealing with complaints are effective and fair.

## 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:

- extend the specialist expertise amongst upper school staff in the teaching of mathematics and ICT and in developing additional literacy and numeracy skills (paragraph 1(3)(e)).

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

- Revise and extend its anti-bullying policy to include reference to homophobia and, for all aspects of bullying policy, identify strategies for its implementation (paragraph 3(2)(a)).

## 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:

- improve the quality of some teaching and assessment to good or better by ensuring that teachers adopt a clear structure and provide high challenge and pace in lessons

- expand provision in the upper school for specialist literacy and numeracy support so that it emulates and builds on the excellent practice in lower school.

## School details

Name of school	Roaches School		
DCSF number	860/6017		
Unique reference number	124495		
Type of school	Residential Special School (BESD)		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1998		
Age range of pupils	7-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 28	Girls: 3	Total: 31
Number of boarders	Boys: 13	Girls: 2	Total: 15
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 25	Girls: 2	Total: 27
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 18	Girls: 2	Total: 20
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 36,312		
Annual fees (boarders)	£ 124,800		
Address of school	Tunstall Road Knypersley Stoke-on-Trent Staffordshire ST8 7AB		
Telephone number	01782523479		
Fax number	01782511875		
Email address	roachesct@btconnect.com		
Headteacher	Mr M Wilson		
Proprietor	Dr Sean Fitzpatrick		
Reporting inspector	Robert Drew AI		
Dates of inspection	6-7 February 2008		