

Access School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	893/6096
Unique Reference Number	132772
Inspection number	322248
Inspection dates	8–9 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Sheila Ann Boyle

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

Access School is a small independent day school set within the grounds of a 24 acre farm, six miles north of Shrewsbury. It admits up to 16 pupils aged 7–16 years with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school was registered in 2000 at its original site in Shrewsbury and relocated to this site in 2003. It had its first inspection in March 2004. At the time of this inspection there were 12 pupils on roll: 3 girls and 9 boys. Ten have a statement of special educational need. The pupils come from several different local authorities across the country and all but one of them are looked after children. The majority are resident in one of the company's homes nearby and a small number come from other independent care homes locally. Pupils aged 11 and 14, have access to external accreditation through the national tests, and accreditation is being developed at Key Stage 4. The school aims to provide *'Excellent teaching, care and support to ensure realistic educational progress, opportunities and life chances'*.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of education provided by the school is inadequate and the school does not meet its stated aims. There are weaknesses in curriculum planning, in teaching and in the way pupils' achievement and progress are assessed, monitored and reported. As a result the pupils do not make as much progress as they could. Opportunities exist for work experience and for external accreditation at ages 11, 14 and 16. Provision of social, emotional, and cultural development is satisfactory; spirituality is not promoted well. The care for pupils is satisfactory; however, some aspects of the school's safety procedures do not meet the regulations, therefore provision is unsatisfactory. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory taking into consideration the complexity of their lives and their learning needs.

Quality of education

The curriculum is inadequate, planning lacks consistency and there is no clear overview of what will be taught. The curriculum is generally broad; pupils study a range of subjects including French and they have good opportunities for outdoor pursuits and educational trips off site. However, the curriculum is not balanced because at present there are too few opportunities for the pupils to develop skills in

information and communication technology (ICT), and in some subjects the curriculum is not implemented to sufficient depth. Assessment is underdeveloped. Insufficient attention is given to the information in each pupil's statement of special educational need (SEN), and consequently teachers are not planning accurately to meet the diverse and often specific needs of their pupils. Subject policies are very basic and do not provide guidance for alternative teaching methods and resources. There are no schemes of work and only limited resources for ICT. Although resources are adequate for other subjects, there are few that make learning more interesting and visually accessible. The programme of outdoor pursuits is enjoyed by pupils and contributes well to their physical and social development. Older pupils receive appropriate careers advice through Connexions career service and most have opportunities for work experience. Links with the wider community are underdeveloped and pupils have very few opportunities to work independently or to show initiative. The range of subjects offered at GCSE is limited to English. This restricted programme limits the opportunities for the pupils who are capable of gaining a wider range of accredited qualifications. There are plans to increase this to five subjects next year. The curriculum includes lessons in personal, social, health and citizenship education, but these aspects are not addressed as part of a planned cohesive programme. Pupils' future economic well-being is not promoted well.

Although, the quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to inadequate, it is inadequate overall. This means that pupils make inadequate progress in their learning. In the satisfactory lessons, teachers plan work for individual pupils, but the work is not always matched well enough to the current needs of each individual. Most lessons start with opportunities for discussion, however, too much of the work is teacher directed and pupils have limited opportunities to work independently and think for themselves. In the weaker lessons, instructions and explanations to pupils are unclear and as a result pupils are not sure what they are expected to do. This can lead to disengagement or disruption. Lesson planning is weak and does not outline how pupils of all abilities will be supported to make progress. Few of the lessons have clear learning objectives that reflect the information in pupil's statements. The completion of work sheets limits the opportunities for writing in some subjects. The introduction of accreditation in English at Key Stage 4 has led to some improving progress in English as those pupils' course work is evaluated more regularly. Although resources are generally satisfactory, they are not used well to meet the needs of pupils of differing abilities. There is an adequate range of books in the school library and suitable text books are available in most subjects. Resources for ICT are limited and those that are available are not used well enough to support teaching and learning.

Although the school uses national tests to check on the attainment of pupils at set times, ongoing assessment and tracking are not developed. The school does not have a whole school assessment policy which shows how pupils' work will be assessed or how their progress will be monitored and reported. As a result assessment is inadequate and many pupils are not aware of the gains they have made in the short or longer term. There is little evidence of personalised learning

where pupils are involved in assessing their own work or setting their own targets. Therefore, they are not clear about what it is they need to do next to make progress.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The school does not meet all of the regulations relating to pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Therefore provision is inadequate. Most pupils make adequate progress in improving their behaviour which is satisfactory overall but there are still incidents where pupils behave inappropriately and accept little responsibility for their actions. Pupils receive satisfactory guidance relating to their personal development but academic guidance is inadequate. Opportunities for social development are extended through the outdoor pursuits programmes and educational trips including a recent residential trip to France for older pupils. Cultural awareness is promoted through the annual international day when pupils look at the food, music and traditions of a selection of countries each year. Through religious education (RE) pupils learn about some of the world's main religions including Christianity. The promotion of spirituality is underdeveloped as there are no formal whole school meetings or periods for reflection. There are limited opportunities for pupils to have contact with the local community and they have too few opportunities for decision making in the school. Through work experience programmes older pupils gain an understanding of the world of work. However, they do not develop an understanding of the role of good citizens as they have insufficient broad general knowledge of public institutions in England.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Whilst the school has sound arrangements in place to ensure pupils' welfare and health, its procedures to safeguard them are inadequate. Individual counselling and therapeutic sessions are available for those with the most complex needs. The staff care about the welfare of their pupils and aspects of the day-to-day care are satisfactory. However, the school does not follow all of the required procedures to ensure pupils' safety. Risk assessments of the accommodation and grounds are not recorded to ensure potential hazardous elements in the school's environment are eliminated. A potentially hazardous incident relating to the safety of pupils was reported by staff to the inspector. Fire evacuation procedures take place regularly but the school's own procedures are not carried out correctly. Registers are not taken following the evacuation and insufficient evaluation is undertaken when the fire drills are finished. In spite of this, pupils report that they generally feel safe in school, participate in regular exercise and know how to keep fit and eat healthily. Arrangements for child protection meet requirements. The child protection officer is not based in school full-time so arrangements have been made for another member of staff to be trained.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school meets all of the regulations in its vetting procedures for staff. However, the school was not aware that it is required to maintain a single register for its entire staff nor was it aware until recently what should be included in the register.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are satisfactory. The former farm house is used as an office, medical room, staff room, and kitchen and therapy base. An adjoining stable block and two mobile classrooms make up the teaching accommodation. Staff have erected a poly tunnel where pupils have opportunities to learn about growing vegetables and flowers and there is a small shed where a few rabbits and guinea pigs are looked after. These facilities are used adequately to help pupils gain experiences in caring for pets and an understanding of food chains. There are adequate washrooms for pupils and staff. The outdoor play facilities are good and include a hard court area and a large playing field at the rear of the building.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides most information for parents and other parties through its prospectus. Although it contains useful information about the school's ethos and curriculum, it does not provide all of the required information. For example, the following information is missing; information about the school's policy on discipline and exclusions; provision for pupils with SEN and those for whom English is their second language; 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. Information on academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations is missing. Annual written reports to parents do not provide sufficient information on the progress and attainment of pupils in the main subject areas taught. Subjects such as ICT, RE and physical education are not included.

Procedures for handling complaints

The complaints procedure has recently been revised and now meets all of the regulations.

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:

- establish a curriculum policy set out in writing and supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, and implement it effectively (paragraph 1(2))
- provide a curriculum that gives pupils of compulsory school age experience in technological learning (paragraph 1(2)(a)(ii))
- ensure the subject matter is appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of all pupils including those with statements of their special educational need (paragraph 1(2)(b))
- ensure that teaching enables pupils to acquire new knowledge, and make progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught (paragraph 1(3)(a))
- ensure that teaching encourages pupils to apply intellectual, physical and creative efforts and to show interest in their work and to think and learn for themselves (paragraph 1(3)(b))
- ensure lessons are well planned and effective teaching methods and suitable activities are used (paragraph 1(3)(c))
- ensure that teachers have a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 1(3)(d))
- ensure there are adequate resources for teaching ICT (paragraph 1(3)(f))
- ensure there is a framework in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and that information from such assessment is used to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress (paragraph 1(3)(g)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (standard 2) and must:

- provide more opportunities for pupils to show initiative, take on responsibilities and understand how they can contribute to community life (paragraph 2(c))
- improve the citizenship programme so that pupils gain a general knowledge of public institutions and services in England (paragraph 2(d)).

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

- ensure regular risk assessments are undertaken of the premises and site and that outcomes are recorded and attended to (paragraph 3(4))
- ensure that staff follow the agreed procedure for fire evacuation (paragraph 3(5)).

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

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- maintain a centralised register of all staff and ensure that it contains all the required information (paragraphs 4C(2, 3, 6, 7 and 9)).

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

- provide particulars of policy on and arrangements for discipline and exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e))
- provide particular of educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements of special educational need and for pupils for whom English is an additional language. (paragraph 6(2)(f)).
- 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))
 - particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations (paragraph 6(2)(i))
 - details of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j))
- provide parents with more information about the progress and attainment of their child in the main subject areas taught including ICT, physical education and RE (paragraph 6(5)).

School details

Name of school	Access School		
DCSF number	893/6096		
Unique reference number	132772		
Type of school	Special		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	2000		
Age range of pupils	7–16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 9	Girls: 3	Total: 12
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 8	Girls: 2	Total: 10
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 8	Girls: 3	Total: 11
Annual fees (day pupils)	£34,960		
Address of school	Holbrook Farm Harmer Hill Broughton Shrewsbury SY4 3EW		
Telephone number	01939 220789		
Fax number	01939 220789		
Email address	verity@family-care.co.uk; jayne@family-care.co.uk		
Headteacher	Ms V White		
Proprietor	Mr Ed Nixon		
Reporting inspector	Sheila Ann Boyle		
Dates of inspection	8–9 July 2008		