

Wathen Grange School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	9376104
Unique Reference Number	134614
Inspection number	322256
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Karin Heap

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

Wathen School offers residential and day provision for a maximum of 26 students ages 11 to 16 with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. The school operates on two sites. The original buildings in Leamington Spa which opened in September 2000 have a six place residential unit. Currently there are three students on roll. A satellite unit was established some 25 miles away in Mancetter near Atherstone for 20 day places and opened in 2007. The site currently has 15 students on roll. The split arrangement provides the school with flexibility with regard to placements and the opportunity for older students to be nearer to college and vocational provision. Most of the pupils currently come from Leicester City and Leicestershire.

The proprietors intend to close the residential provision at Leamington Spa at the end of June and reopen the refurbished site as a day unit for 20 students with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties from September 2008. At the same time the proprietors intend to provide education for one student at post-16 at the Mancetter site.

The school aims to prepare its students for social challenges, economic independence and the demands of adulthood. It also aims to offer a curriculum which broadly follows the National Curriculum whilst incorporating an appropriate range of knowledge, skills and experiences beyond the classroom situation. The school aims to foster partnerships with carers and other professionals who are significant in students' lives and to promote positive relationships with all students.

Evaluation of the school

Wathen Grange is a satisfactory school overall where students have opportunities to build positive relationships with adults and peers. The school does not meet several regulations and the quality of the curriculum is inadequate. Assessment is not sufficiently rigorous to enable staff to plan lessons of consistent quality. Arrangements for the welfare of students are satisfactory; however some aspects for ensuring safety procedures are not fully effective. Provision of social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory; staff are fully committed to supporting students and their families.

Quality of education

The curriculum is inadequate. Although the school offers a broad curriculum at a level appropriate for the age range of the students, in some subjects the planned curriculum is not implemented to sufficient depth and assessment is underdeveloped. Insufficient attention is given to the targets identified in students' statements of special educational need. As a consequence teachers have difficulty in planning accurately to effectively meet the diverse and often specific needs of their students.

The amount of formal taught time falls below that recommended nationally for students of this age. However, the school includes all break times and lunchtimes as an integrated part of teaching time. These are identified as essential learning opportunities to develop students' communication, social, emotional and behavioural skills. Activities at break and lunchtime are linked to the school's planned provision for personal and social education. Overall curriculum plans and policies are very basic and do not provide guidance for alternative teaching methods and resources. Curriculum resources are adequate but there are few that make learning more interesting and visually accessible.

The curriculum is enhanced through work experience and some community initiatives. These include fund-raising for children's charities, for example Water Aid, and a gardening project to help local citizens. Students in Years 10 and 11 have opportunities for externally accredited courses including entry level qualifications for motor vehicle studies. There are also links with other providers for example for bricklaying and plastering courses. The school offers a limited range of extra-curricular activities for sport, such as football, and cycle maintenance.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and the majority of students make satisfactory progress over time. There is a particular focus on developing students' personal and social skills and progress in these areas is monitored adequately. Academic assessment and tracking, however, are not sufficiently rigorous and the school has not yet implemented a whole school framework to ensure students' work is matched to their academic ability as well as their specific and individual needs. As a result some students are not yet making the progress of which they are capable. More recently, progress in English and mathematics shows signs of improvement. Most lessons are teacher directed and provide few opportunities for independent learning and problem solving. In good lessons, activities are matched to the needs of individual students and support assistants are used effectively to support students in their learning. Lessons do not always start promptly and some are disrupted because escalating inappropriate behaviour is not effectively managed to reduce the negative impact on students' learning.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Overall learners enjoy school and find it better than their past educational experience. As one student remarked 'I am making good progress in my behaviour, social and

emotional skills as well as my work to achieve Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) silver level.'

Students' behaviour is satisfactory overall taking into consideration their complex needs. The school, however, does not yet use individual and agreed behaviour management plans to ensure strategies used are consistent, and students are given clear boundaries and understand their rewards and sanctions. The school has a non confrontational and diverse approach to dealing with challenging behaviour and there are several positive examples of good progress noted in students' annual reviews and within the reward records for monitoring effort and progress in social skills. Appropriate behaviour, however, is not demonstrated consistently in lessons and other social situations.

Most students demonstrate good communication skills and are adequately prepared for adulthood through world studies and the ASDAN bronze and silver award. The school provides individualised and very supportive transition arrangements and works closely with other agencies to help students transfer into further education, training or work.

Students develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills through world studies and the programme of personal and social education. Through aspects of the curriculum students develop a basic understanding of other cultures and community affairs. All work is closely related to students' personal aspirations, feelings and emotional needs.

Students report that they enjoy music, art and practical activities but some report that they find some lessons boring and the work too easy. They have some say in how the school is run, for example, the young persons' committee has contributed to some improvements in the school, such as school lunches which recently have become healthier.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Pupil's welfare, health and safety are satisfactory and staff ensure that students feel safe and well looked after and have an appropriate awareness of healthy living and keeping safe. Students are offered fruit and juice at breakfast, and school lunches, which are bought in from an outside provider, offer some healthy foods. Students have physical education (PE) twice a week as well as a reward activity on a Tuesday afternoon which also includes a high element of physical exercise. Students show some understanding about how to live healthily.

The school undertakes regular checks of the premises and staff receive instant induction to ensure safe practice. However, some regulations related to fire safety and students' safety within the building are not met.

The school uses a range of risk assessments to ensure on- and off-site activities are conducted safely. However, not all off-site risk assessments take sufficient account of the complexity of needs in each students' group. The school has drawn up a three-year accessibility plan for disabled pupils and fully complies with its duties under the *Disability Discrimination Act (2002)*.

The school is working hard to improve students' attendance and has a programme to support attendance and home tuition; this is delivered by teachers and the school's home liaison officer. The school applies a first-day call policy. Due to the nature of students' very complex backgrounds and personal needs, attendance for some is not consistent, often as a result of short term exclusions or on some occasions absconding from school. The school works closely with other agencies to overcome these difficulties.

Out of the three local authorities who have placed pupils here, two responded to the questionnaire and, together with five parents, all commented favourably on the provision. Pupils respond positively when questioned about the school and indicate that they are generally happy to go to school and feel teachers listen and help them on an individual basis.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has recently reviewed its procedures for the safer recruitment of staff and meets all of the regulations in this respect. It has compiled a single central register to monitor that all the appropriate checks are made prior to confirming the employment of all staff.

School's premises and accommodation

Currently the accommodation on both sites is fit for purpose. However, the Mancetter site does not offer facilities for students who are ill and some aspects of the accommodation are unsafe including windows which lack safety catches to prevent students from falling out, and an uneven surface in the playground. These were brought to the attention of the headteacher and proprietors during the inspection. Once the proposed changes and refurbishment at the Leamington Spa site are completed, the building is likely be suitable for the education for up to 20 day students. Similarly when the proposed refurbishments on the Mancetter site are completed the accommodation will have facilities for pupils who are ill and suitable arrangements will be in place to provide education for one student at post-16.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides opportunities to consult with parents and local authorities annually through a formal review meeting. The annual report describes pupils' work and conduct. Each term the school holds an open day where parents visit school and spend time in class and with the staff. Parents greatly value this opportunity to link up with the school.

The school has recently updated its prospectus and it now fulfils all the reporting requirements.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a clearly written and fair complaints procedure which meets the requirements.

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:

- provide a scheme of work for all subject areas which is effectively delivered according to what is planned (paragraph 1(2))
- take sufficient account of the information in students' statements and individual education plans when planning their teaching programmes (paragraph 1(2)(e))
- improve teachers' understanding of students' aptitudes, needs and prior attainment through effective assessments and rigorous monitoring of progress (paragraph 1(3)(d))
- implement a formal framework to assess pupils' work and behaviour regularly and thoroughly, therefore more effectively informing planning and 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:

- review the behaviour policy and ensure that staff implement it consistently with clear sanctions identified and strategies written in students' agreed behaviour management plans (paragraph 3(2)(d))
- secure all windows with stays and ensure the uneven surface at the outside play area is levelled to avoid possible trip hazard (paragraph 3(4))
- ensure the school's fire alarm can be heard effectively inside the art room and work shops (paragraph 3(5)).

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

- implement the plans to provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are unwell (paragraph 5(l)).

School details

Name of school	Wathen Grange School		
DCSF number	9376104		
Unique reference number	134614		
Type of school	Special for students with BESD		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	2000		
Age range of pupils	11–16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 18	Girls: 0	Total: 18
Number of boarders	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 17	Girls: 0	Total: 17
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 4	Girls: 0	Total: 4
Annual fees (day pupils)	£30,000–£43,000		
Annual fees (boarders)	£140,400		
Address of school	Lillington Road Leamington Road Leamington Spa Warwickshire CV32 5YY		
		and	
	Church Walk Mancetter Nr. Atherstone Warwickshire CV9 1PZ		
Telephone number	01827 714454		
Email address	chris.nock@completecure-warks.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Chris Nock		
Proprietors	Mr Steve Shinner. Mr Mike Finnie.		
	Mr Viron Mangat. Mr Paul Mangat		
Reporting inspector	Karin Heap		
Dates of inspection	13–14 May 2008		