

Queenswood School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	884/6011
Unique Reference Number	131353
Inspection number	322262
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Mark Mumby HMI

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

Queenswood is an independent day school for boys and girls aged 10 to 16 years. It provides education for young people who have severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, a history of violence and disaffection, have low self-esteem and have been out of education for a long time or have experienced disrupted education. Most of the students have statements of special educational need. The school's mission statement is *'to enable its students to acknowledge and cope with their specific difficulties and, through the provision of appropriate full-time education, assist them in fulfilling their potential.'*

The school is located on the outskirts of Ledbury in Herefordshire and is owned by Priory Education Services. The school opened in January 2000 and is registered for 16 students. There are currently eight full-time students on roll. The school was last inspected in February 2005. Since then it has undergone considerable changes including a reduction in student numbers and a change of operation from four separate sites to one site. The school shares a site with a residential care home which is also owned by the Priory Group. The home is registered separately and was last inspected by Ofsted in February 2008.

Evaluation of the school

Queenswood School provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. It is particularly successful in raising their self-esteem and re-engaging them in full-time education. Pupils value the individual approach to meeting their needs and respond well to the range of opportunities they are given. The school has successfully addressed the shortcomings identified in the last inspection report and meets most of the requirements for registration.

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is based on a core curriculum covering English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and personal, social and health education (PSHE). The core curriculum is underpinned by some detailed schemes of work. Those for English and mathematics are particularly good and make effective use of National Curriculum and National Strategy materials. However, curriculum planning for the human and social, and aesthetic and creative

aspects of the curriculum is less well structured. The core curriculum is personalised to meet the needs of the individual pupils and is supplemented with appropriate physical activities. The school aims to prompt change in the pupils' lives, broaden their horizons and open up new opportunities. It does this successfully through the effective use of a good range of off-site activities, including using an outdoor site which focuses on developing life skills in an ecologically sensitive setting. The comprehensive PSHE programme covers sex and relationships education, bullying, substance misuse, healthy eating, citizenship and cultural values. The very good links between education and care staff ensure that pupils' PSHE can be built on effectively in care settings.

Pupils are able to gain a wide range of qualifications and awards relevant to their needs and appropriate for their abilities. These include Entry Level qualifications, National Vocational Qualifications and GCSEs. The Award Scheme and Development Accreditation Network scheme provides good opportunities for students to gain awards that recognise their development of practical life skills. Pupils receive helpful careers guidance through the Connexions service and this is complemented with good opportunities for work-related learning. For example, pupils have opportunities to participate in a wide range of experiences including hairdressing, health and social care, agricultural work and motor mechanics.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory and the pupils make satisfactory progress. Teachers know the pupils well and lessons are well planned with activities that suit their interests. Most lessons have clear learning outcomes. Good links are made with practical skills that the pupils need in preparation for adult life. Teachers use questioning skills effectively to check pupils' understanding and extend their thinking. However, on occasions, pupils are not given enough time to think about their response before being prompted by the teacher. As a result, pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to think for themselves. Teaching groups are small and the one-to-one support that pupils receive in many lessons is a significant factor in retaining their engagement in activities and enabling them to make progress. Pupils usually have good attitudes to their learning and relate very well to the adults working with them. However, when they find work too challenging and they have not got one-to-one support, their behaviour deteriorates quickly and they achieve very little. The limited teaching resources available restrict the opportunities for pupils and sometimes slow the pace of lessons. For example, pupils are not able to study food technology, there is a shortage of basic mathematical equipment and they miss opportunities to benefit from using resources such as interactive whiteboards.

Pupils' work is marked thoroughly and teachers provide helpful developmental comments. Pupils take note of these comments and this contributes to the progress they make. Although there are suitable systems in place to assess pupils' attainment, this information is not used systematically to track the progress of each pupil. As a result, it is difficult for the school to demonstrate the effectiveness of its work.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Many pupils demonstrate a sense of achievement and success through gaining nationally recognised qualifications, which does much to promote their personal development. Their behaviour is satisfactory and there is a calm atmosphere around the school. Occasionally some pupils are reluctant and non-compliant in lessons and this is a barrier to their learning. Meal times are pleasant occasions where pupils socialise and eat nutritious foods. Most pupils have a sense of right and wrong and generally respond well to expectations of appropriate behaviour. Some exhibit challenging behaviour on entry to the school, but over time this improves substantially. For the majority of pupils their attitudes to work and to each other are often positive.

The school is successful in re-engaging pupils in their learning through the PSHE programme. This work helps to prepare pupils for the future through teaching them about the risks of substance misuse, safety and personal finance. Pupils' improved attendance, compared to their previous settings, indicates they are starting to enjoy learning more. However, the lack of punctuality to lessons in the morning and following breaktimes impacts negatively on pupils' overall progress.

Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the wider community, for example, through working on a farm or fund raising for charity. Some pupils attend an environmental education centre, which helps them to develop independence, self-confidence and self-esteem. They are given a broad understanding of public institutions and services through visits to the fire service, museums and visits from the police. Pupils' appreciation of their own cultures is promoted well and themed weeks help to promote pupils' understanding of different cultures and backgrounds.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The welfare, health and safety of the pupils is satisfactory. There are appropriate procedures to ensure pupils' safety. However, there is no designated child protection officer on the school site and not all staff know clearly who they would contact in case of a concern arising. The school has plans in place to rectify this situation. Pupils who have extreme behaviour problems or mental health issues access advice and support from the in-house therapy and support services team. These include a psychiatrist, psychologist, psychotherapist and music therapist. There are effective links with pupils' care provision to ensure their needs are met.

Appropriate risk assessments are carried out for activities both on and away from the school site. Pupils are taught to be aware of potential hazards and how to be safe in lessons. They reported they feel safe from harm and bullying. However, the anti-bullying policy, although broadly satisfactory and effectively implemented, lacks detail. For example, it does not include a definition of homophobic bullying. Pupils are well supervised at all times. They are very motivated to earn the rewards on offer for meeting their targets and understand the sanctions they face for misbehaviour.

Routine checks are made on electrical equipment and fire drills are practised regularly. There are effective procedures for first aid and staff are appropriately trained. Although the school is a non-smoking site, several pupils have established smoking habits which the school manages effectively by restricting opportunities for smoking to a minimum.

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)*.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has appropriate procedures in place relating to the checks it makes on prospective employees regarding their identity, qualifications, medical fitness and suitability to work with children.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is housed in attractive grounds which provide suitable outdoor areas for recreation. The buildings have been appropriately adapted to meet the needs of the school. Although the classrooms are limited in size they are adequate for the small teaching groups. Specialist teaching rooms on site are limited to an ICT room and a room designated for art. However, good use is made of off-site facilities for physical activities and outdoor education. The school does not currently have appropriate facilities for pupils who may become ill. The buildings are clean and tidy, although some general maintenance, such as replacing the carpet in the ICT room, is overdue.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school keeps comprehensive records about each of its pupils. Very informative weekly review sheets, half-termly interim reports and full written reports each term ensure that parents, carers and placing authorities are well informed about the progress and attainment of each pupil.

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 classroom resources of an adequate quality, quantity and range and ensure that they are used effectively (paragraph 1(3)(f)).

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

- ensure that there is a full time and appropriately trained member of staff on the school site responsible for child protection to comply with DCSF guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (2007) (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

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

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l))
- ensure that all floor coverings are in good condition (paragraph 5(s)) .

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 curriculum planning to ensure that all aspects are planned to an equally high standard
- make more effective use of assessment data to track the progress of individual pupils and provide better challenge in lessons.

School details

Name of school	Queenswood School		
DCSF number	884/6011		
Unique reference number	131353		
Type of school	Independent day school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	January 2000		
Age range of pupils	10–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll	Boys: 6	Girls: 2	Total: 8
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 6	Girls: 1	Total: 7
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 5	Girls: 2	Total: 7
Annual fees	£40,000		
Address of school	Callow Hill Farm Hereford Road Ledbury Herefordshire HR8 2PZ		
Telephone number	01531 670886		
Email address	catherineedwards@priorysolutions.com lisastevens@priorysolutions.com		
Headteacher	Miss Lisa Stevens		
Proprietor	Priory Education Services		
Reporting inspector	Mark Mumby HMI		
Dates of inspection	14–15 May 2008		