

Lewis Charlton School

Independent Special School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	855/6020
Unique Reference Number	134438
URN for social care	SC059033
Inspection number	329428
Inspection dates (Education)	12–13 February 2009
(Welfare)	25 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Sue Aldridge
Social care inspector	Mick Walklin

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). The inspection of boarding was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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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.

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.

This was a light touch educational inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Lewis Charlton School opened in September 2003 and is situated in the centre of Ashby-de-la-Zouch. It is registered as an independent residential special school for boys and girls with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties aged 11 to 16. All students have a statement of special educational needs. It recently applied to have its registration extended so that it can take 25 students up to the age of 19 and while awaiting approval for this it established provision for students over 16. At the time of the inspection there were 20 students on the school's roll, of whom four are boarders. Lewis Charlton aims to provide a unique blend of therapeutic education and care for up to 25 secondary aged students who have experienced difficulties within mainstream and possibly other special educational provision. Its focus is on empowering students to realise their intellectual and social potential by presenting mainstream curriculum and community responsibilities in a manner that enables individuals to understand that their experiences are relevant, their feelings validated and their contribution meaningful. The school's education was last inspected in December 2004. An inspection of the boarding provision last took place in November 2007.

Evaluation of the school

Lewis Charlton provides a good quality of education and boarding. It meets all but one of the regulations in the standards that were inspected this time and nearly all of the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools. It has successfully met regulations that were not met at the time of the last inspection. It has also established good quality provision for students over 16 and has made good overall improvements since the last inspection.

Quality of education

The school provides a good quality curriculum. For students from 11 to 16, the curriculum is well matched to their ages, abilities and the needs prescribed on their statements, as it includes the National Curriculum and religious education. Students over 16 have not had their statements amended; these also specify the National Curriculum and religious education and these are no longer relevant for this age group. In fact, the school has created a good post 16 curriculum that is well matched to students' ages, abilities and future aspirations.

By taking full advantage of its residential facility and its location at the centre of the town, close to a secondary school, a library and a leisure centre, the school provides a broad and well enriched range of learning experiences. It has productive links with a college in a nearby town, so that students in Year 9 and above who are ready for this have access to a range of pre-vocational tasters. There is a strong emphasis on social and emotional aspects of learning, provided through therapeutic group work, counselling and key worker sessions as well as a formal programme of personal, social and health education.

The school successfully personalises the curriculum to meet the changing needs of its students. For instance, it has created two comfortably furnished 'nurture' rooms for small groups, as well as small, quiet rooms where students can withdraw and 'chill' should they need some time away from others. A small number of students are taught individually when they first arrive.

Students over 16 have individual timetables that reflect their needs and aspirations. Those who have remained at school to improve their examination grades are accommodated in the main school, whereas others follow the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness at school and combine this with vocational tasters or vocational courses at college. There is a suitable range of accreditation for students of all ages and abilities. Unit awards provide short-term goals, and some of these build into entry level accreditation. There are also GCSE courses, those accredited by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network and the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Visits and school journeys add interest and enjoyment. Those provided as rewards for students who meet their targets for work and behaviour are a particular hit with students. Many enjoy working on the school farm nearby where they engage in a variety of practical tasks, including preparing the ground for planting, erecting shelter and looking after small animals.

Teaching and assessment are good and enable students to make good progress and achieve well. For instance, last year, several were successful in gaining unit awards, entry levels and full GCSE passes. Initial teacher assessments are used effectively to plan work for students. Teaching draws on schemes of work for each subject so that the content of lessons is appropriate for the ages and learning needs of the students. Practical tasks are provided that appeal to students, such as when they learn about ratios by mixing 'cocktails' with different proportions of orange and lemonade.

Teachers also make good use of models to explain scientific principles, such as how the blood clots.

The three-part lesson is well established and teachers make sure that students know what the learning objectives are. Students are keenly aware of the importance of their behaviour and the quality of their work in lessons, as assessment sheets on these are completed at the end of every lesson and reviewed at the end of each day.

Staff have good management skills and understand individuals well. They establish good relationships with students and there is generally an atmosphere of mutual respect between staff and students.

Regular assessments enable staff to see how well students are progressing. Strong subject knowledge is a feature of much of the teaching, and teaching generally presents a suitable challenge for students. However, occasionally tasks are comfortably completed by students and teaching does not encourage students to deepen their knowledge and understanding. For example, occasionally answers are given too readily by teachers rather than by prompting to give students an opportunity to work things out themselves.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students make good improvements in their social adjustment and their behaviour is most often good. Strong working relationships between the school and the residential provision ensure consistency in the implementation of agreed procedures. School life offers students many opportunities to be recognised for good work and effort as well as improving behaviour. As a result, students grow in their self-confidence and self-esteem. Most attend well and improve their attitudes to work. Feedback from staff, a well known code of conduct and subjects such as religious education provide students with a clear moral code and an awareness of their rights and responsibilities.

There are satisfactory opportunities for students to learn about how society works. Their place within the school community is reinforced daily through morning and afternoon meetings. The school council contributes ideas on how the school should be run, such as the structure of the rewards system. However, not all students see the school council as an influential group. Involvement of students in the wider community is good; students regularly visit a home for older people and they raise funds for charities at home and abroad. Religious education and other subjects enable students to learn about beliefs, customs and cultures other than their own. They develop tolerance and respect for other cultures and beliefs. Students have many incidental opportunities to learn about how society works, such as how the school has had to seek planning permission to use a former home as a school building and students hold mock elections. The citizenship curriculum is currently being revised to ensure that students learn systematically about how governments work.

Students steadily develop independence skills, by taking increasing responsibility for themselves, carrying out tasks such as shopping, preparing and cooking meals as well as doing their own laundry. They also develop career preferences and awareness of the world of work. They establish life goals that they work towards. The progress that they make socially and in developing their basic skills ensures that they are well prepared for the next step when they leave school.

Safeguarding students' welfare, health and safety

Safeguards for assuring students' welfare, health and safety are good in both the school and the residential provision. All the required checks are carried out on staff prior to their appointment to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. Appropriate training in child protection procedures has been provided for all staff. There is a satisfactory fire risk assessment and staff are trained in how to deal with fire. There are sufficient staff trained in first aid. Supervision is good and post 16 students are encouraged to take increasing responsibility for themselves. Students learn about how to keep themselves safe; they know what constitutes bullying and what to do when an incident occurs. As a result they feel safe in school. Students are taught about healthy lifestyles and they take ample physical exercise and drink plenty of water at school, although not all of them make healthy choices at mealtimes. The school has a suitable plan for increasing access for people with disabilities.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The quality of boarding at Lewis Charlton School is good and the school meets nearly all of the key National Minimum Standards. The school's residential provision actively supports students' educational progress. It enhances the opportunities available to students, allowing them to engage in activities that they would not usually be able to experience. This allows good progress both academically, socially and emotionally by means of improved attendance and engagement in classes. Students also have excellent opportunities to develop life skills in the residence. Teaching and residential staff work in close liaison with some staff working across both settings as 'Educarers'. Communication is enhanced by means of whole school meetings at the beginning and end of the school day where students' achievements are celebrated. Parents have a very positive view of the contribution that the school and residence makes towards their child's development. Students receive excellent support and there is a strong relationship with staff. Students commented, 'Staff are there for us when we need them'.

Students feel safe in the residence. Their welfare is safeguarded by good procedures to protect them from bullying and abuse. The anti-bullying strategy has a high profile within the school with bullying confronted by the use of sanctions, incentives and individual discussion. Parents are reassured that their child is safe while staying at the school. Students have confidence in approaching staff if they have complaints or concerns and say that these are dealt with effectively. The school promotes acceptable behaviour by the use of praise and rewards, with fair and consistent ground rules. A proactive, rather than punitive approach is central to the behaviour

management strategy. There is also a strong ethos of students being responsible for their own conduct. Staff are well trained to deal with difficult and challenging behaviours, with students saying that physical interventions and sanctions are fully justified. However, the school discipline policy is confusing, stating that withdrawal of privileges is a permissible sanction, although this is not being recorded as such in the sanctions log. Students' privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled.

There is good provision for addressing students' health needs with suitable arrangements with local doctors, dentists and opticians. Physical activity is encouraged by the use of local leisure facilities. Issues around sexual health and substance misuse are effectively addressed as part of the school curriculum and by means of individual key sessions. However, health information in care plans is not comprehensive enough. For example, conditions such as asthma are not identified in individual plans and medical histories are not included. Robust procedures for the receipt, storage and administration of medication ensure safety. Medication is only administered by staff that have completed the safe handling of medication course. A healthy and varied diet is available and encouraged. Fruit and filtered water are freely available and salads are served with most meals.

The residential accommodation is of a very high standard with spacious communal areas and individual bedrooms which are extensively personalised. Students confirm that admissions to the residence are sensitively handled to ensure that their needs and wishes are taken into account. They are well supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the residence is run. Care plans provide good guidance about students' short and long-term needs. There is good provision for ensuring that students are able to maintain appropriate contact with their families during their stays. However, some students complained that the rules restricting mobile phone use for safeguarding reasons are unfair. Staff provided a satisfactory explanation as to why this restriction is in place.

There are effective arrangements for the management of the residence with identified duty managers to cover in the head of care's absence. Residential staff are well trained and supported. Staffing levels are appropriate to the needs of students with low staff turnover providing continuity of care. The gender mix is appropriate for the students accommodated. The promotion of equality and diversity is good with students commenting that the school helps them understand and respect other backgrounds. The school is ideally situated to promote inclusion in the local community. There are good procedures for monitoring the operation of the residence by the headteacher, head of care and an external visitor. Information about the school is provided for parents and placing authorities, although this does not describe what the school sets out to do for those students it accommodates and the manner in which care is provided. Information about the residence is provided for students in booklet format, but they commented that it is 'boring' and requires more pictures.

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 the one listed below.

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

- ensure that where students have a statement of special educational needs, the curriculum provision matches that prescribed on each statement (paragraph 1(2)(e)).

In order to meet the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools and associated regulations the school must:

- ensure that the school brochure describes what the school sets out to do for those students it accommodates and the manner in which care is provided (NMS 1)
- ensure that there are consistent guidelines about the use of sanctions (NMS 10)
- ensure that health plans contain the information recommended (NMS 14).

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:

- provide activities that challenge students of all abilities in all lessons
- complete the review of the citizenship scheme of work so that students are able to systematically develop an understanding of how governments work.

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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The quality of boarding provision

Evaluation of boarding provision		✓		
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School details

Name of school	Lewis Charlton School		
DCSF number	855/6020		
Unique reference number	134438		
Type of school	Residential special		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 2003		
Age range of pupils	11–19		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 14	Girls: 6	Total: 20
Number of boarders	Boys: 3	Girls: 1	Total: 4
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 14	Girls: 6	Total: 20
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 3	Girls: 3	Total: 6
Annual fees (day pupils)	£43,152		
Annual fees (boarders)	£79,490		
Address of school	North Street Ashby-de-la-Zouch Leicestershire LE65 1HU		
Telephone number	01530 560775		
Fax number	01539 563013		
Email address	LewisCharlton@btconnect.com		
Headteacher	Ms Georgina Pearson		
Proprietor	Ms Georgina Pearson		
Reporting inspector	Sue Aldridge		
Dates of inspection (Education)	12–13 February 2009		
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