

The Robert Ogden School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	370/6004
Unique Reference Number	106965
URN for social care	SC032154
Inspection number	330032
Inspection dates	18–19 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Terence McKenzie
Social care inspector	Robert Curr

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).

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 08456 404040

www.ofsted.gov.uk



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.

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.

An inspection of the boarding provision was also carried out. The full report on this provision is not published but may be obtained from Ofsted by telephoning 08456 404040.

Information about the school

The Robert Ogden School is an independent mixed special school owned by The National Autistic Society which is a registered charity. It currently caters for 116 pupils and young people aged eight to 19 years, all of whom experience learning difficulties through autistic spectrum disorders. Situated on the edge of a small town in the district of Barnsley, the school occupies a large campus that was previously a local authority owned secondary school. Pupils come to the school from 25 different authorities and all have a statement of special educational needs. Robert Ogden School was first opened in 1977 and enjoys an unusual stability of staff in that many have been employed at the school for longer than ten years. The school's main aims are to encourage the learners to be able to live and work together, to share opportunities for learning in a school that is innovative and well resourced, and to offer learners a high quality of teaching and care. The school was last inspected by Ofsted in May 2005.

Evaluation of the school

The Robert Ogden School fully meets its aims and it provides an outstanding quality of education. It is extremely well led and managed by an experienced senior team and has continued to make very good progress since the last inspection by Ofsted in May 2005. The school looks after the pupils very well and parents, carers and pupils are keen to express their support for it, as do the local authorities. The school takes great care to evaluate the needs of pupils when they first arrive and this process is effective in ensuring their subsequent integration. Attention to understanding individual needs through a multidisciplinary and holistic approach throughout the first two terms ensures that pupils are well placed to access the educational opportunities that the school offers, even when they might have had little academic success in the past. Consequently, pupils come to enjoy their education and they make remarkable progress. The Robert Ogden School meets all of the regulations that were inspected this time.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding because it is designed effectively to meet individual pupils' needs. Through the hard work of the staff, exceptional help and guidance are provided to pupils when choosing appropriate curriculum pathways. Primary and early secondary school courses are derived from the National Curriculum and these schemes of work are carefully adapted to be appropriate to the needs of the pupils concerned. For the 14 to 19 year-olds, there is a wide choice of externally accredited courses ranging from GCSE to the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and the Unit Award Scheme. A few of the young people access college courses from time to time according to their ability to integrate successfully and the school produces vocational based courses that, for example, make use of on-site facilities for catering, pottery and horticulture. Pupils and parents are pleased with the options available, particularly in the upper school, and they believe that the curriculum provides opportunities for the pupils to develop skills that will contribute to independent living when moving on to the next stages of life. The curriculum in the school is well supported by the work that pupils undertake in extra-curricular activities and enrichment experiences; a notable theme that runs through all aspects of curricular activity is attention to the development of the basic skills of communication, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT).

Teaching and assessment in the school are at least good and sometimes outstanding. The good teaching is effective in enabling pupils to engage successfully with the curriculum and make progress. Teachers provide evaluation opportunities in lessons so that pupils are able to know how well they are doing. The school works hard to plan lessons that are carefully matched to pupils' standards and abilities but lesson planning is not sufficiently well developed to make use of the cues and prompts that would remind teachers to make better use of individual pupils' targets during lessons. The robust centralised assessment recording and reporting system enables the school to make good use of the data available concerning pupils' progress. The system does not provide good enough information about pupils' progress through the 'P' scales and National Curriculum levels to enable teachers to plan appropriate learning outcomes for individual pupils based on good quality prior attainment information.

Pupils' achievement folders show that teachers assess pupils' work regularly and accurately. Pupils are encouraged to be proud of their work and, considering their communication difficulties, they often make very effective oral contributions during lessons. Pupils' progress in lessons is good but overall it is outstanding, particularly for those who have been at the school for longer than three years. This is because of the significant value that they gain in their education in the widest sense through extra-curricular and enrichment activities and it is evidenced, for example, through the effective use of individual education plans and behaviour support plans. Progress is further aided by the formation of pupils' positive relationships with each other and with the adults who work with them. The school's 'Access for Learning' strategy enables pupils to attend, engage, learn and make progress, often for the first time in their lives at school.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and pupils are well-prepared for moving on to the next stage of their lives. Personal social and health education and citizenship schemes have been carefully developed to meet the needs of these young people with autism. That pupils enjoy school is apparent through their high levels of attendance and zero rate of unauthorised absence. Additionally, attendance at lessons is very high and tracked rigorously to ensure that it is maximised. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and they are therefore able to make the best use of opportunities to achieve extremely well at school when compared to their very low starting points.

Charity events allow pupils to gain experience in aspects of enterprise work and they are encouraged to undertake planned work experience on- and off-site according to their capabilities, with support if necessary. The school maintains strong links with the Connexions service so that pupils have access to information about careers and moving on. The Robert Ogden School recently gained a prestigious 'eco' award and is now working towards the next level of that award with the cooperation of the pupils who are engaged in activities such as recycling and saving energy. The school council meets regularly to express the views of the pupil body and it is notable that for pupils with communication difficulties, the school is extremely successful in enabling them to work cooperatively and to share experiences in lessons and other activities.

Aspects of spiritual education are addressed in religious education and through assemblies which provide opportunities for reflection. Whole-school events celebrate a range of religious festivals throughout the year and there are links with cultural education through such activities as special meals, visits to religious buildings and receiving visitors into school to talk about their beliefs and cultures.

The school emphasises the value of the autistic community and many pupils thus begin to understand more about other communities through taking part in trips and visits out of school, and through receiving visitors into their lessons. Regular work is undertaken to help pupils to understand more about cultural diversity through aspects of the curriculum and through school events such as enjoying the music of 'Zulu Nation'.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding because they receive an exceptional standard of care and support through a multidisciplinary partnership approach in the school. Pupils are well supervised at all times and they say they feel safe and unthreatened. Pupils report that the school is conducive to making friendships with other young people and they talk warmly about the positive relationships with staff.

The school has good systems in place for safeguarding pupils' well-being including undertaking the necessary staff checks before appointment. Parents and carers

agree that pupils are very well looked after. The child protection officer has received full and appropriate training and all staff are trained in child protection processes and procedures. They also receive training in first aid and the correct arrangements are in place for the recruitment and induction of new staff.

Pupils are proud of their contributions through the school council to the recent initiatives in healthy eating. Most undertake at least two hours of physical activity each week in accordance with their needs and abilities. Pupils are supported by a school nurse who is independent of the running of the school, and through lessons in PSHE, science and food technology, pupils are informed about maintaining a healthy body and reducing health risks. They are encouraged to consider how healthy lifestyles should include the reduction of stress, better diet and appropriate exercise, and awareness of their own environmental impact.

The school has an up-to-date plan to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and has complied with the need to produce fire risk assessments for the buildings.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The residential provision was judged to be satisfactory and National Minimum Standards were met. A full report on this provision is available on application to Ofsted.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

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:

- consider how assessment and recording processes can be revised in order to obtain more detailed information about pupils' progress so that lesson planning is better informed
- reconsider the processes of medium-term planning and lesson planning so that better individual targets can be constructed for pupils during planning for lessons

- give further attention, through statutory DDA planning, to how less-mobile young people and adults might access the large and challenging school building.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

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	✓			
--	---	--	--	--

The quality of boarding provision *(leave blank if not applicable)*

Evaluation of boarding provision			✓	
----------------------------------	--	--	---	--

School details

Name of school	The Robert Ogden School		
DCSF number	370/6004		
Unique reference number	106965		
Type of school	Special		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1977		
Age range of pupils	8–19		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 99	Girls: 17	Total: 116
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 99	Girls: 17	Total: 116
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 22	Girls: 2	Total: 24
Annual fees (day pupils)	£34,062		
Headteacher	Mrs Gillian Roberts		
Proprietor	National Autistic Society		
Reporting inspector	Terence McKenzie		
Dates of inspection	18–19 November 2008		