

# Whinfell School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	909/6054
Unique Reference Number	134781
Social Care Unique Reference Number	SC066821
Inspection number	330035
Inspection dates	26 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Caroline Broomhead HMI
Social care inspector	Anne Bannister

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.

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

Whinfell School is a small residential school which provides education and care for up to nine boys aged 11 to 19 years. There are four boys on roll and all have a statement of special educational needs. They are all in the care of the local authorities who place them at the school. The boys have complex needs associated with Asperger's Syndrome and/or emotional and behavioural difficulties. They have all experienced significant disruption to their schooling in the past. The school opened in 2003 and its last education inspection was in 2005. The most recent boarding inspection took place in May 2007.

## Evaluation of the school

Whinfell is a well established school which cares well for its students and provides them with a good standard of education. It is held in high regard by parents and placing authorities. The school has continued to improve since the last inspection and some aspects of its work, such as provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. The students enjoy school and make excellent progress in their personal development which then enables them to go on to make good progress in their learning. The school very effectively achieves its mission statement which says that it respects, values and supports all young people. The school meets nearly all of the independent schools regulations and the National Minimum Standards for boarding. However, it does not have a satisfactory Accessibility Plan as required under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

## Quality of education

The overall quality of education is good. The good curriculum is carefully tailored to match students' needs and interests at the same time maintaining appropriate breadth and depth of study. At Key Stages 3 and 4 it is based on the National Curriculum and in post-16 there is a strong emphasis on preparation for adult life in the wider community. The school also places great importance on developing students' communication and social interaction skills which are often very weak when they start at the school. Personal, social and health education is taught in discrete lessons as well as across the curriculum. Physical development is promoted through regular outdoor activities, such as fell walking, as well as sports using local community facilities. Some students who are initially reluctant to take part in such activities soon begin to enjoy them and see the benefits to their health. There have been significant improvements in provision for modern foreign languages and information and communication technology (ICT) since the last inspection. Students' creativity is nurtured through art and music therapy. In most subjects a modular approach is used which enables students to complete units of study and to receive accreditation for these. The students are proud of the extensive range of units they have completed. However, these do not indicate the level of skills and knowledge gained and do not easily demonstrate increasing progression. Individual students are studying Entry Level courses and Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALAN) courses. The school has recently introduced new courses such as BTEC Work Skills Certificate to further develop vocational education.

In this small school there are many opportunities for enhancing the curriculum across education and care. Students are encouraged to pursue their interests and are given good support in doing so. For example, they attend hydrotherapy at a local school, participate in air cadets or attend local further education colleges to study performing arts. Facilities for teaching practical science and technology are limited within the school building but the school seeks to address this, for example by supporting individual students to undertake technology based projects in the community.

Teaching and assessment are good with some excellent features. Due to their complex needs, the students' abilities vary considerably. For example, a student's reading skills may be in line with those expected for their age but their level of comprehension may be at a much earlier stage of development. Some may surprise others with their 'hidden' levels of general knowledge which once they become settled in school begin to emerge. Students are usually taught on an individual basis and this enables them to concentrate and remain focused. At other times during the week they come together as a group, for example when out on outdoor pursuits or during morning assemblies. Teachers follow the students' lead and interests, using these very effectively to motivate students and to form the basis for developing knowledge and skills in different subjects. Visual and pictorial resources are generally used well to aid students' understanding. However, some of the resources used are more suitable for younger pupils than the teenagers on roll. Literacy, communication and ICT are promoted well across all subjects. Planning for individual needs is

detailed and based on regular assessment and review of students' learning and social development.

The students make excellent progress in their personal development and good, and sometimes very good, progress in their learning. Some students find it very difficult to cope with external test conditions and their results, for example in Key Stage 3 SAT tests, do not necessarily reflect what they can achieve in less formal situations. Teachers assess students against national level descriptors in all subjects and against external course requirements, although systems to check the reliability of teacher assessment are underdeveloped and the school is rightly considering how it might address this by working with other schools. Most students achieve unit award certificates and some, for example in post-16, successfully achieve qualifications in vocational courses such as Level 1 in Dance.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The students arrive at school with little in the way of study skills. They find it difficult to communicate with others in a positive manner and their challenging behaviour creates a significant barrier to their learning. In this calm, positive environment they learn to trust adults, to manage their own aggression and to respect themselves and others. Their behaviour is good. Through carefully structured individual programmes, the school is very effective in promoting students' confidence and readiness to learn. The students are able to stay in class for increasing periods of time and more willing to listen and follow instructions. They begin to enjoy school. The regular 'get together' meetings each morning are carefully planned to draw students' attention to moral issues, such as making a difference or showing acts of kindness. These values are then promoted throughout the day. As the students mature, they take a more active part in making choices and decisions which affect them. For example, they may express an interest in doing voluntary work and, with very good support from staff, successfully contribute their efforts in the local community. In another example, a student organised a sponsored run which raised £200 for Children in Need. The students learn to become more independent both in the home and in the community. They learn to manage their pocket money and to use bank accounts for saving. Throughout the year there are many opportunities for the students to learn about different cultures, such as the 'Ghana day'.

## Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good. High levels of staffing ensure that students are well supervised and supported at all times. Procedures for safeguarding students are generally good. All staff have been subject to enhanced checks with the Criminal Records Bureau prior to appointment. Most staff have received the necessary training, for example in child protection, to enable them to undertake their roles and responsibilities effectively. However, a small number have not yet been trained in the school's physical intervention techniques and the school is

therefore failing to meet the relevant National Minimum Standard. Risk assessments are routinely carried out and the necessary health and safety and fire checks take place. The premises are clean and well maintained and provide adequate accommodation for living and learning. The school's Accessibility Plan is very scant and does not provide sufficient details of the steps it intends to take over the next three years to bring about improvements.

Parents and placing authorities are provided with detailed annual reports which keep them well informed about students' personal development and achievements.

## Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The residential provision was judged to be good and most 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, with the exception of those listed below.

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

- Ensure that staff are trained in physical intervention techniques in line with the schools' preferred approach (paragraph 3(3), National Minimum Standard 22.8).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

## 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:

- Draw up a staff training and development plan which incorporates statutory training requirements and is aligned to the school development plan.
- Develop systems to check on the reliability of teacher assessment.

# 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	Whinfell School
DCSF number	909/6054
Unique reference number	134781
Type of school	Special
Status	Independent
Date school opened	April 2003
Age range of pupils	11-19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 4
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 4
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 4
Annual fees (boarding pupils)	£178,0000
Telephone number	01539 723322
Fax number	01539 723322
Email address	mail@whinfellschool.co.uk
Headteacher	Mr Richard Tyson
Proprietor	Mr J McGlynn, Mrs A McGlynn, Mr R Tyson, Mrs S Tyson (Whinfell School Limited)
Reporting inspector	Caroline Broomhead HMI
Dates of inspection	26 November 2008