

# Appleford School

## Independent Special School

### Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	865/6008
Unique Reference Number	126535
URN for registered childcare and social care	SC039141
Inspection number	330283
Inspection dates	30 September-1 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Thomas Smith
Social care inspector	Paul Clark

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended. 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, the purpose of which is 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 Boarding 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.

## Information about the school

Appleford School is a co-educational boarding and day school, approved by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, which provides for pupils with dyslexia and associated language difficulties, dyspraxia and ADHD. Pupils are aged from 7 to 14 years and there is a total of 77 on roll, 61 boys and 16 girls. 48 pupils are boarders. 18 pupils have statements of special educational need. Pupils are funded through a variety of sources, including local authorities, privately or the Children's Education Advisory Service. The school opened in 1988 on the outskirts of the village of Shrewton near Salisbury. The school aims to *'rebuild and maintain pupils' self-confidence, to alleviate the negative feeling of failure and to encourage each pupil to achieve his/her potential in academic, personal and social development'*. Ofsted last inspected the school in 2006.

## Evaluation of the school

In fully meeting its aims Appleford School provides an outstanding education for its pupils. All aspects of the school's work are at least good and many features of these are outstanding. Pupils say that they are pleased to be at the school; this is understandable, because they experience good teaching, very careful consideration of their individual needs and are supported by a seamless provision for their personal development. The needs of boarding and day pupils are fully considered. The school meets all the education regulations but for two non-compliance issues in the boarding provision, which is also judged to be outstanding. The school has successfully addressed all the issues raised in the last inspection report.

## Quality of education

The quality of education is outstanding. The curriculum is broad but planned to meet the individual needs of all pupils. Where pupils have a statement of special educational need the curriculum fully meets the stated aims because of the meticulous ways in which these are addressed. The curriculum provision extends into

the residential setting and the activities offered within this area provide outstanding opportunities for pupils to develop their individual personalities and increase their confidence to learn. Day pupils also benefit from many of these opportunities and they too use these to develop strengths within their own characters and learning.

The emphasis in the curriculum is to develop pupils' basic skills and in this the school is outstanding. Pupils are taught in groups related to their attainment and this enables teachers to focus their work more sharply. The development of literacy skills, as well as other basic skills, is a constant focus of the school's work. The literacy curriculum is planned extremely well and this ensures that all staff have a good awareness of where its advice can support their own teaching. The effective links between school and boarding staff complement the learning undertaken by pupils and ensure that the curriculum is extended into a purposeful twenty-four hour experience.

Pupils make good progress; often, for individuals, this is also outstanding. Standardised test results show that in the period from September 2007 to June 2008, 95% of pupils made gains in their reading, of these almost half made good gains and more than one-third made outstanding gains. Most start from a base that is below expectations but the gap between this and their final achievement is considerably narrowed. Pupils' attitudes to their learning are outstanding. Even though many find the work challenging they show a determination to succeed that results in extended concentration on individual tasks.

The quality of teaching is at least good and lessons frequently have outstanding features. Lesson plans are based on the requirements of each pupil's individual education plan and derived from evaluations of previous lessons. In all lessons pupils receive attention that is individual to their needs. Plenaries at the end of lessons are exemplary and these provide teachers with information about the effectiveness of their teaching. Teachers provide tasks for pupils that are not only matched well to their attainment but are very challenging and based firmly on what pupils already know. Information and communication technology is used very effectively to consolidate and extend learning. Pupils are also involved in appraising the work of their classmates and are challenged to offer ways in which they might improve it. In some sessions the complex difficulties exhibited by one group of younger pupils impede the quality of their learning.

Assessment processes are rigorous. The school sets demanding targets for the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy. Continuous assessment is a feature of all lessons, for example when teachers assist pupils and mark the work as they go; at such times they provide oral and written comments to help pupils understand what they need to do in order to improve. Longer term assessment is undertaken through standardised tests; these provide information to the school management, which enables it to form a view about the effectiveness of teaching.

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. This has been achieved in part by a regime of regular support and appraisal for teachers. Parents have indicated they too are very pleased about teaching quality and its outcomes. All teachers are fully included in the evaluation and development of the curriculum because they have a well-defined responsibility for the academic health of their subject. Since the last inspection the resources to support teaching and learning have also improved. All classrooms have now been equipped with interactive smart boards.

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

The provision for this aspect of pupils' development is outstanding. Many pupils arrive at the school with fragile self-confidence. The school has an ethos of nurturing individual self-confidence and because of this pupils blossom and gain in their self-esteem. By the time they leave they are very well prepared to go to their next phase of education. Many have successfully reintegrated into their chosen secondary school.

Older pupils, particularly, have an outstanding awareness of themselves as well as those around them. They are very empathetic to the needs of their fellow pupils. Often they will help others with their work, sharing their ideas and knowledge, or they may help out should others be in distress. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Courtesy and consideration are second nature to them. Community responsibility is a focus for all pupils, whether this is in fund raising for different charities or assuming the roles of class monitors or head boy or head girl.

The school makes outstanding provision for the personal development of its pupils and because of this they develop a depth to their characters and show an obvious enjoyment of learning. Attendance figures are outstanding. There is a culture of success and encouragement within the school which, nevertheless, sets demanding standards for its pupils. Pupils' learning difficulties are addressed well through the curriculum, teaching and other provision so that pupils learn appropriate skills that enable them to successfully manage the world around them. Within the boarding setting, for example, pupils play a full part in the decision making process, regarding matters that affect them.

Pupils have a good understanding of the world because they positively contribute to the school and wider community. The school council meets regularly and decisions arrived at in this forum are communicated to the rest of the school. Charitable fund raising activity is also a way in which pupils become aware of how other parts of the world differ from their own. The school also holds specific cultural events that are multi-cultural in nature. Tolerance of different views, traditions and racial harmony is encouraged through the curriculum; this occurs in subjects such as the humanities and religious education and also within the personal, social and health education programme.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is outstanding. Pupils say they feel safe in this school. The school has in place all the appropriate procedures that safeguard pupils and which ensure their welfare at all times; staff implement these rigorously. The tutor system responds sensitively to issues which may affect either day or boarding pupils.

Pupils are supervised at all times and this is achieved against a background of many activities that interest them and in which all take part. Many of these are robust physical activities, but the school also provides other, quieter activities, in both the boarding and education settings. The range caters for the interests of most pupils. Pupils have an acute awareness of health issues. Many pupils expressed the view that they thought the food is very good, with a good range of choice. One pupil summed this up by saying '*The food is good and yummy*'.

Staff are aware that in previous schools their pupils may have been bullied and this may have shattered their confidence; because of this the whole school has zero tolerance of any possibility of bullying. The outcome to this is that pupils say they are not aware of anyone being bullied and because of this they feel unthreatened. The pupils adopt the culture of safety within the school. They are taught about hazards that could affect them; this is done with reference to the maturity of each pupil.

There is an appropriate and comprehensive plan in place that meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has in place appropriate and rigorous procedures for the appointment of staff. The outcomes are recorded within the required central register.

## School's premises and accommodation

The school management has made an old building work to support a safe and effective learning environment. The school development plan indicates an immediate intention to extend the dining room, featured in recent social care inspection reports, as being too small. The extensive grounds are used very well to support the curriculum.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school management provides an extensive range of up-to-date and relevant information to parents of boarding and day pupils. Parents are overwhelmingly

positive in their attitudes to the school and grateful for what it does on behalf of their children.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school has not had any complaints within the last year. However, there are appropriate procedures in place to handle any it might receive, including in the boarding houses. Parents indicate that in the event they might wish to complain they would be aware of how they could do this.

## Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The organisation of boarding is outstanding. The school has an effective range of management systems in place including a clearly written 'Statement of Purpose' and a 'Young Person's Guide'. Each young person has a care plan against which their social and developmental needs are purposefully reviewed.

A high standard of record keeping supports management activity, for example, recruitment records include all anticipated checks. The school has an induction programme and all staff receive ongoing training in key skills, however, training is not recorded on personnel files. All staff have an annual appraisal identifying their training and developmental needs. Informal supervision of care staff is recorded but a written copy of the supervision notes is not held by both parties. More than 80% of the care staff have an NVQ Level 3 qualification in Child Care and the head of care is currently undertaking the NVQ Level 4 qualification in Child Care.

One of the proprietors of the school conducts the required monitoring visits. This ensures that the effectiveness of practice is known to and owned by the proprietors.

Arrangements to promote the health and wellbeing of young people are outstanding. Health information is carefully recorded, including children's health histories. All prescribed medication is safely stored, and staff receive training in the administration of medication. All staff attending to boarders are first aid trained and boarders access GP services locally. Boarders from overseas are registered with local GP, dentist and optician services.

Young people are kept well informed of their health and development needs through a comprehensive personal, social and health education programme. All teaching and care staff work to programmes to bolster the self-esteem of the young people. The school employs the services of a trained counsellor/psychotherapist.

Children's questionnaires stated how much they enjoy the food at the school. Good systems underpin this and healthy eating is promoted. There are a good array of snacks and drinks available in the boarding houses at night time.

Outstanding arrangements keep young people safe. Annual training ensures staff are

fully conversant with child protection / safeguarding policies and procedures. A straightforward complaints procedure is fully explained to young people verbally and in their Young Person's Guide. No complaints have been received in the last 12 months. The information documents given to parents do not currently include contact details for Ofsted.

There is a clearly written 'Bullying Policy' and young people are well aware of the 'zero tolerance' of bullying in the school which is reiterated every day at morning assembly. The telephone boxes in the boarding houses and around the school afford privacy and display contact details of Childline and Ofsted.

The bursar is the appointed health and safety officer and he ensures that necessary annual checks take place. There are health and safety representatives amongst the staff and appropriate risk assessments of facilities and equipment are in place. The school has a 'Crisis Management Plan' giving guidance to staff in the event of an extreme event.

Residential support of children's educational progress is outstanding. Excellent communication systems exist between care and teaching staff. Educational materials are provided in the boarding houses and care staff are involved in educational support. The school ethos ensures all staff work hard to raise young people's self-esteem and genuinely celebrate their achievements. Specialist individual support is accessible to meet the educational and developmental needs of young people. There is a vast range of appropriately risk assessed out-of-school activities, within the school and in the wider community.

Good systems ensure that young people are consulted and that their contributions to the running of the school are valued. The school council meets every half term and young people's representatives can voice their opinions about how the school is run. Group meetings every evening in the boarding houses seek young people's views. Good systems ensure that young people can have regular contact with their families both by telephone and email. Parental visits are encouraged and supported by the provision of private areas within the school.

A good standard of boarding accommodation supports young people to live as independently as possible. It is encouraging that the school has requested planning permission for the development of a larger and lighter dining room, the existing one being rather small and dark. Separate boys and girls boarding houses are divided into dormitories of five or six beds. All dormitories are well furnished and are bright and airy, with sufficient toilet and shower facilities. Each boarding house has a TV lounge with an array of games, puzzles and educational materials. Young people wear school uniform during the school day but may change into their own clothing in the evenings. All personal clothing is labelled and laundry is effectively managed.



## What must be done to secure future improvement?

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

- ensure that a dated record of staff training undertaken is listed on their personnel file (NMS 19)
- ensure that a written copy of supervision notes is held by both the supervisor and the member of the care staff who is supervised (NMS 30.3).

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

## What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for education development:

- consider the deployment of more assistant staff to ensure that the needs of those younger pupils, who have more complex learning difficulties, are fully supported
- to raise standards further, consider involving the school in research projects with national bodies, with a view to staff gaining a deeper understanding of dyslexia, and influencing the ways in which it can best be managed.

## 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	Appleford School		
DCSF number	865/6008		
Unique reference number	126535		
Type of school	Special school for pupils with dyslexia and associated language difficulties, dyspraxia and ADHD		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1988		
Age range of pupils	7-14		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 61	Girls: 16	Total: 77
Number of boarders	Boys: 38	Girls: 10	Total: 48
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 16	Girls: 2	Total: 18
Annual fees (day pupils)	£14,631		
Annual fees (boarders)	£21,531		
Address of school	Shrewton Salisbury Wiltshire SP3 4HL		
Telephone number	01980 621020		
Fax number	01980 621366		
Email address	secretary@appleford.wilts.sch.uk		
Headteacher	Ms Stella Wilson		
Proprietor	Dr P Gardner & Mr M Petherick		
Reporting inspector	Thomas Smith		
Dates of inspection	30 September-1 October 2008		