

Chelfham Senior School

Independent Special School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	878/6039
Unique Reference Number	113616
URN and social care	SCO36528
Inspection number	330288
Inspection dates	3–4 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Jonathan Palk HMI
Social care inspector	Michelle Oxley

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.

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.

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.

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

Chelfham Senior School is an approved independent residential special school which provides education for boys with autism including emotional and behavioural difficulties. All students are from White British backgrounds. The school occupies two rural sites near Tavistock in Devon. The main school site at Bere Alston provides education for students aged 11 to 16 years. The continuing education department is at Kilworthy House, approximately ten miles away, which provides education for students over the age of 16 years. Students from the Bere Alston site make regular use of the Kilworthy site for their vocational studies. Most students at Bere Alston and Kilworthy have additional learning and communication difficulties including autism and all have a statement of special educational needs (SEN). An increasing number of students have complex autistic impairments. Many have experienced difficulty with their previous care placements and have a history of disrupted schooling. This means that many are reluctant learners who have low self esteem and some resentment towards authority. Ten students are placed for 52 weeks of the year, nine attend daily and the remainder are placed for 38 weeks. Most students attend from local authorities in the South of England and they are encouraged to make home visits wherever possible. Places are funded by boys' local education authorities, or in the case of a few, by their local health authority. Twenty-one boys are looked after.

The school aims to provide a caring environment where students learn to control their behaviour and achieve their academic potential. Appropriate behaviour is encouraged through praise and rewards and some students receive regular counselling. The school seeks to provide the full National Curriculum for pupils. There is a strong emphasis on improving their *self-esteem and giving them a better chance at life* through participation in a programme of outdoor pursuits.

Evaluation of the school

Chelfham School meets its aims and provides a good quality of education and excellent care for its students. The overall effectiveness of the boarding provision is good. The school helps students to develop positive attitudes about themselves, about others and about learning. It improves their ability to manage behaviour and move towards independent living. Effective leadership focuses on ensuring that the curriculum is matched to suit the specific needs of students and has high expectations of their behaviour, safety and well being. The curriculum, teaching and assessment are good and students make good progress. Good improvements have been made since the school inspection of January 2006 and the social care visit in May 2008. The school now meets all the education regulations and all but one of the required National Minimum Standards. The current principal has just recently taken up post.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. The school plans a good breadth of learning activities, which are well supported by National Curriculum programmes of study, vocational pathways and nationally accredited courses, including the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). The 24 hour curriculum provides students with an extremely well planned programme of educational visits and outdoor education programmes that contribute to their health education and personal development. Well developed links with local colleges ensure that a good range of vocational studies are offered to students. Links with the local community are used to provide work experience, such as running a stall at the local market, but overall there are insufficient opportunities to enhance the experiences for the Kilworthy students through work based learning.

The content of the curriculum is well matched to the ages, abilities and interests of the students, although creative talents are not always fully challenged. Subject plans are used well by teachers to plan their lessons. Literacy and numeracy are given a high priority with individual catch up programmes and one-to-one sessions for all students. These programmes link well with students' individual education plans (IEPs), behavioural plans and their statement of educational needs. This ensures that the right choice of strategies is chosen to encourage learning in the class and build confidence in the students as learners. Care staff provide good support for students' progress with a reading club and help with completing the ASDAN portfolio after school although some parents, carers and the students would welcome more. The use of the Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication handicapped Children framework (TEACCH) is effective in providing appropriate expectations of those with complex autistic spectrum disorders. The Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (CoPE) has been introduced and contains modules of work that are relevant to students' future needs. There is good support from the Connexions careers service in planning for college link courses but the transition for Kilworthy students into employment, education or training settings is variable in its

success. Preparation for adulthood is very well supported by the work of the therapy team in consultation with care staff who help students to build a positive picture of themselves. However, there are insufficient information and communication technology (ICT) resources in all departments and there is not enough use made of practical or creative activities to support the development of writing and mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good. Students behave well and make good progress in lessons. Individual rates of progress in lessons vary, related to many factors in students' learning difficulties. However, the school's success in dismantling the barriers to learning by developing students' self esteem ensures that they achieve well. The school has suitably qualified and experienced teachers who have a good knowledge of their subjects. They are competently supported by teaching assistants who work effectively in helping students. Students' behaviour is managed well and this ensures that lessons pass with minimal disruption. Most teachers have good questioning techniques and are often able to encourage students to discuss and put forward thoughts and ideas. The aim of lesson planning is to match work to each student's capabilities. However, a few teachers are not as successful as most others in identifying what students are expected to achieve or in reminding students of their learning objectives as the lesson progresses. This has an adverse impact on students' motivation and behaviour. Most teachers are good at reviewing with the students what has been learnt and recording this in their learning plans, which helps them evaluate progress. This makes a good contribution to the success of learning.

Assessment is good and much improved since the last inspection. Students come into school with scant records of previous achievement, mainly because they have had breaks in their learning. The school undertakes robust checks on a range of attainment and also learning styles. This helps with establishing starting points and also in matching courses to each student's potential.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Students' good personal development is underpinned by the great strides that they take in their awareness of themselves and each other and their growing independence. There is consistent management of behaviour throughout the school and residential home. The school has made great strides in limiting the impact of low self esteem on learners through the application of token and points rewards. The system is well understood by students and all staff. Negotiations about the use of this scheme both as a reward and sanctions are transparent, fair and have students' agreement. All students have made good progress in personal development and become more confident as they realise that adults, parents and carers recognise their achievements. This transition has been skilfully managed through the weekly achievements assembly, and the newspaper and the weekly diary that is widely distributed. The close monitoring of each student's behaviour plans and keeping their behaviour targets current and relevant helps them to manage their behaviour with increasing good effect. Short term and permanent exclusions have reduced significantly as have incidents of bullying in both the residential and school settings. Staff have very clear guidelines on how to address individual difficulties which are

applied in both the school and the home. Students' behaviour is good, and although there are times when they show anger or resentment, most of the time they show respect for their surroundings, for the staff and for visitors. The effective partnership built up in recent months between care and teaching staff, combined with the therapy services' effective involvement, is having a positive affect on students' personal development, academic progress and their preparation for future economic well-being. Students' attendance at lessons, in relation to their past educational history, shows dramatic improvements; they re-engage in learning, enjoy school and begin to take pride in their achievements.

The ethos of the school promotes self awareness and self esteem. Students' moral development is strongly supported by the staff setting good examples for respecting and showing concern for others. The school makes every effort to show students how they can make a positive contribution to the school and in the community. The panel that specifically address bullying is just one of many examples where students are active in shaping the community they live in. Recently, students have undertaken various fund raising activities, which develops further their skills in relating positively to others, including those from different cultural traditions.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The arrangements for welfare, health and safety are outstanding as these are high priorities for the school. Managers and staff approach their work with enthusiasm and a commitment to continuous improvement. They maintain a sharp focus on reducing the number of physical restraints, the development of creative strategies to counter bullying and have done some excellent work to enable young people to voice their concerns. These approaches have resulted in a rapid reduction of incidents. There is an impressive and extensive range of safeguarding policies that are consistently implemented. All the required safeguarding checks are made and safer recruitment and health and safety training are up to date. There is a very good ratio of staff to students at all times and students are very well supervised. The links between academic tutors and key workers are excellent ensuring that if additional care is required to help the transition between the home and school it is made available. Communication between the home, school and parents is impressive, with all incidents, no matter how minor, being fully shared. All the regulations in regard to information for parents and others have now been met. The hand-over meetings between teachers and care staff in the morning and after school are efficiently organised. High expectations of attendance, punctuality and appropriate dress are maintained. There is a high take up from students for an extensive range of outdoor and leisure activities that makes an excellent contribution to a healthy lifestyle as well as extending future choices.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The residential provision was judged to be good and National Minimum Standards were met in all but one aspect. 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.

In order to meet the required National Minimum Standards and associated regulations the school must:

- adopt an individualised approach to assessment for the use of door alarms, ensuring that written permission is sought from the placing authority in every case (Regulation 22)

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 the access to sustainable work based learning for Kilworthy students.
- Ensure that lessons provide more opportunities for student to learn with the aid of information and communication technology and through practical and creative activities.

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

Evaluation of boarding provision		√		
----------------------------------	--	---	--	--

School details

Name of school	Chelfham Senior School
DCSF number	878/6039
Unique reference number	113616
Type of school	Special
Status	Independent
Date school opened	1 January 1986
Age range of pupils	11-19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 50
Number of boarders	Boys: 41
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 50
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 21
Annual fees (day pupils)	From £47921
Annual fees (boarders)	Term time board from £79869 52 week board from £136599
Address of school	Priory Central Office Priory House Randalls Way Leatherhead Surrey KT22 7TP
Telephone number	01372 860400
Fax number	01372 860401
Email address	johnsteward@priorygroup.com; helensharpe@priorygroup.com
Headteacher	Dr J Steward
Proprietor	Priory Education Services
Reporting inspector	Jonathan Palk HMI
Dates of inspection	3–4 February 2009