

Tumblewood Community School

Independent Special School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	865/6034
Unique Reference Number	132775
URN for registered social care	SC028435
Inspection number	330392
Inspection dates	18–19 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Andrew Redpath HMI
Social care inspector	Wilfried Maxfield

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.

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

Tumblewood Community School is a small residential special school for girls of secondary age who have behaviour, emotional and social difficulties. It was established in 2001 and occupies a former farmhouse with adjacent outbuildings near the town of Westbury in Wiltshire. The school is in the ownership of an independent company, Tumblewood Project Ltd. Currently 11 girls are on the school roll, seven of whom have a statement of special educational need. As well as displaying challenging behaviour, several young people have additional learning and communication difficulties. All are in the care of their local authorities and reside in two houses on the school site. Young people come from various parts of England and have their places funded by their local authorities.

The school was last inspected by Ofsted in January 2006 and by Ofsted's Children's Directorate in September 2008. The school aims to provide a therapeutic community where the education, care and therapy provision work closely together to 'develop the whole person, academically and personally'.

Evaluation of the school

Tumblewood Community School provides a good quality of education and care and is successful in meeting its aims. Good teaching, complemented by an excellent range of therapies, ensures girls make good progress. The residential care and teaching staff work together closely which plays a significant part in promoting girls' good personal development. The school has made good progress since the last inspection, particularly in improving the quality of teaching and the breadth of the curriculum. It meets almost all the educational regulations.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. The school provides a broad range of experiences which takes close account of the national curriculum. It has a clear curriculum policy and schemes of work are in place for all subjects. Subjects include English, mathematics, science, food technology, humanities, art and design, information and communication technology and dance. Appropriate topics are

covered in the personal, social and health education programme and physical education is provided by visiting a local sports centre. Some practical aspects of science and design technology are not provided due to the limited facilities available. All students study the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) based on developing students' basic skills and promoting their independence. Several students have the opportunity to work on a local farm where they study animal care. There is a suitable balance between subjects and the length of the taught week exceeds minimum requirements. The two classes are arranged broadly according to age with flexible planning to allow students to follow individual course modules. The school day is split into 40 minute lessons with short breaks in between which helps students to maintain concentration.

The school has established excellent links with visiting professionals to ensure that students' special educational needs are met fully. Suitable careers guidance is offered through visits from a Connexions adviser. The 24-hour curriculum is enhanced by a good range of activities organised by the care staff which includes outdoor pursuits and visits to the theatre and museums.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Teachers and care assistants work together closely in lessons and manage any incidents of misbehaviour in a calm and reassuring manner. This creates a relaxed yet purposeful atmosphere in lessons. Teachers set work which has the right level of challenge which enables students to experience success. As a result young people display positive attitudes to learning. Lessons are generally well planned and often follow units of work based on set courses. Occasionally planning focuses too much on the activity to be completed, rather than on what pupils' are expected to learn. Teachers are very resourceful in responding flexibly to students' individual interests and mood swings. A range of activities are often held in reserve in case students struggle to maintain concentration. Teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge and use it effectively to adapt lessons to meet the needs of young people with behavioural difficulties. Different subject areas are allocated appropriately amongst staff to ensure curriculum coverage. Resources to support teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers adapt materials carefully to meet students' individual needs and select topics and texts which capture students' interest. Good use is made of information and communication technology which enables students to research topics and prepare 'power point' presentations. There are few artefacts to support the teaching of history, geography and religious education. Homework is set regularly and completed in the care homes.

Students make good progress. When they join the school, a wide range of educational assessments takes place which informs a comprehensive placement plan. Most students improve their literacy skills and almost all gain ASDAN accreditation and some GCSE or Entry level qualifications. Often students have had negative experiences in previous settings and have a history of poor school attendance. Whilst at Tumblewood School they re-engage with learning and make good progress in managing their behaviour and in improving their self-esteem.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Students' personal development is good. A clear ethos permeates the school which is based on understanding each girl's individual difficulties and the fostering of a strong feeling of group support. This encourages girls to help each other and is very effective in promoting a sense of belonging. Within this stable environment, girls improve their self-esteem and their ability to work co-operatively. All girls have experienced rejection in the past and many arrive at the school having established inappropriate patterns of behaviour. Given their starting points, their behaviour is good. They are pleased with their progress since joining the school and are polite when talking to visitors about their work and life at the school. Young people particularly value the extra-curricular activities on offer which improve their self-confidence and sense of achievement. These activities are often organised by the residential care staff, and include horse riding, visits to the local sports centre and an outdoor pursuits centre, and a residential trip to Aviemore in Scotland.

Students' social development is promoted well through the group activities and when they work co-operatively, for example during the half-termly 'project weeks'. A pleasant atmosphere prevails in the care homes when young people eat together at meal times. Girls help with domestic chores in the residential homes and look after animals on a local farm. Other opportunities to contribute to the wider community are limited. Students' preparation for their future economic well-being is satisfactory. They learn to apply themselves to tasks more consistently and develop their information and communication technology skills. The personal, social and health education programme includes relevant topics which help to prepare students for leaving school, such as budgeting and opening a bank account. However, the school lacks an overall independence programme, which includes both care and education, to prepare students systematically for independent living. The ASDAN and personal, social and health education curricula include consideration of human rights and responsibilities and the role of public institutions and services. Students' understanding of different cultures and religions in modern Britain is taught through 'world religions' topics in humanities and the study of texts in English. The school takes appropriate opportunities to encourage attitudes of harmony and tolerance in this context.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is good. Staff provide appropriate role models and establish good relationships with students. As a result, girls feel safe and well cared for. In the words of one, 'Staff always listen to you if you have any issues.' A significant strength of the school is the provision of an excellent range of therapies to support students' emotional and educational development, including speech and language therapy, psychotherapy and play therapy. Appropriate arrangements are in place to safeguard students and staff have received recent training in child protection. Detailed health and safety policies and

procedures cover all aspects of the school's work. The behaviour policy is supported by a popular reward system which enables students to receive vouchers and certificates for performing well. Incidents of significant misbehaviour are few, but are recorded thoroughly. A range of very appropriate topics are included in the personal, social and health education programme which encourage students to lead a healthy lifestyle and to keep safe. These include food and nutrition, sexual health, exploring personal feelings and positive relationships. A visiting nurse helps to deliver aspects of this programme. The school has a 'no smoking' on the school site policy which is generally followed. Fire drills are held regularly and fire-fighting equipment is checked by a specialist company. The school completes a fire risk assessment, however, at the time of the inspection fire escape routes were not clearly marked in some parts of the main school building. The school has an accessibility plan which meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Procedures for the recruitment and appointment of both education and care staff are thorough. All staff are subject to clearance at an enhanced level with the Criminal Records Bureau to ensure that they are suitable to work with children and all checks made are appropriately recorded.

School's premises and accommodation

Residential accommodation is provided in the main house and an adjoining bungalow. It is homely and well-maintained. Education is provided in two general classrooms, an information and communication technology suite, an art room and a performing arts room. Learning is enhanced by attractive displays. Additional rooms are available for therapy, individual and small group work, although there are no specialist facilities for teaching practical science or design and technology. During the inspection, access through one fire exit was obstructed which compromised the ability to make an emergency evacuation. Outside recreation takes place mainly in the courtyard and a lawned area. A swimming pool is open in the summer months and there is access to an adjoining field owned by the school.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school has recently updated its prospectus which includes all the required information. Detailed reports are provided at the end of each term which outline students' progress in each subject. An attractive booklet '*Tumblewood Community*' is also given to young people when they join the school which contain useful information.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a detailed procedure for handling complaints which meets all the requirements. Young people have made a few complaints in the past year which have all been resolved satisfactorily.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The residential provision was judged to be good. Two National Minimum Standards were not met fully. 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 ('the Regulations'), 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:

- maintain a satisfactory level of fire safety identified by its risk assessment, by making escape routes clear (paragraph 3(5)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- ensure fire exits are not obstructed and that there is sufficient access to enable emergency evacuations to be accomplished safely (paragraph 5(g)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- implement an independence programme, involving both care and education, which prepares young people for leaving school
- extend opportunities for young people to contribute to the community.

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 *(leave blank if not applicable)*

Evaluation of boarding provision		✓		
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School details

Name of school	Tumblewood Community School		
DCSF number	8656034		
Unique reference number	132775		
Type of school	Special school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	August 2001		
Age range of pupils	12 - 16		
Gender of pupils	Girls		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 11	Total: 11
Number of boarders	Boys: 0	Girls: 11	Total: 11
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 7	Total: 7
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 11	Total: 11
Annual fees (boarders)	£200,000		
Address of school	The Laurels 4 Hawkeridge Road Heywood Westbury Wiltshire BA13 4LF		
Telephone number	01373824 466		
Fax number	01373824 321		
Email address	phil.madden@tumblewood.org		
Headteacher	Mr Phil Madden		
Proprietor	Sue Hortop & John Kearney		
Reporting inspector	Andrew Redpath HMI		
Dates of inspection	18–19 March 2009		