

Owlswick School

Independent Special School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	845/6007
Unique Reference Number	114660
URN for social care	SC049794
Inspection number	330395
Inspection dates	27 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell
Social care inspector	Angela Gunning

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 interim inspection of the boarding provision was also carried out by a Social care Inspector. The interim inspection looked at the progress the residential provision has made with the requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection.

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

Owlswick School was established in 1981. It is a small residential school for pupils aged between 10 and 19 years who have emotional and behavioural difficulties, often combined with moderate learning difficulties. Most pupils are placed at the school by local authorities in the south of England, and five are in public care. All pupils have a statement of special educational need, and although the school admits both boys and girls, all the seven pupils currently on roll are boys.

Pupils are taught in two classes that are broadly, but not exclusively, determined by age; one class is predominantly for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and the other for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Some post-16 students attend local colleges of further education full-time.

All pupils have had disrupted schooling, with many having been out of school for considerable lengths of time. The school aims to re-introduce pupils to education and to encourage them to take responsibility for their actions through enabling them to feel secure and by developing their confidence and self-esteem. Through its broadly Christian ethos, it seeks to achieve these aims by celebrating pupils' achievements and efforts and by developing their understanding of how their behaviour can have profound effects on others. The school was last inspected in June 2005 and the last social care inspection was carried out on September 8th 2008.

Evaluation of the school

Owlswick School provides a good quality of education and boarding for its pupils. It makes good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and this is shown by the positive relationships and good behaviour of the pupils. It is

successful in meeting its aims. Parents and referring local authorities report that they are satisfied with the work of the school. The school has maintained its strengths since the last inspection and has improved the quality of its provision, although the two regulations that were not met at the time of the last inspection have not yet been addressed.

Quality of education

The quality of education provided is good and enables the pupils to make good academic progress and improve their attitudes to study. The curriculum is good due to its coverage and the very significant impact of residential activities that promote boarders' confidence and independence. Policies and planning are suitably based on the National Curriculum and an approved syllabus for religious education. There is an appropriate focus on the improvement of basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Other programmes include science, design and technology (DT), information and communication technology, humanities, art, physical education (PE) and personal, social and health education (PSHE). In Key Stage 4, pupils take courses in English, mathematics and science at Entry Level and art at GCSE level. In the last two years, pupils have achieved grades ranging from A to D. Other subjects, such as DT, PE and PSHE are not currently accredited by the school although the pupils' work would merit external recognition. In addition to citizenship education, there is a good careers education and guidance programme. The majority of pupils leave to take up education, employment or training, which represents good progress in view of their difficulties.

The quality of teaching is good. A significant strength evident in the best lessons is the emphasis on practical experiences that engage the pupils and reduce the need to focus on behaviour. For example, in a science lesson, the pupils used tubing and plastic bags to make a working model of lungs. The pupils follow instruction well and appreciate the benefit of written plans and lessons that have a brisk pace and high expectations of work and behaviour. In mathematics, for example, the pupils developed an understanding of geometry using compass and rulers to construct arcs relevant to triangles of a given perimeter. On occasions, adults do much of the work that could be done by pupils through practical activities. All subjects encourage the use of literacy and numeracy, although sometimes opportunities are missed to display key subject-specific vocabulary. The expertise of staff in mathematics, art and DT is used to good effect.

The teachers' assessment of individual pupils is good, although occasionally, the recording of levels achieved is too broad to encompass the small steps in progress made by pupils. The involvement of pupils in assessment of their own learning is not a routine feature of all lessons. Monitoring of classroom practice by the managers is undertaken regularly and the school is in the early stages of data analysis to make even better use of the information it holds.

The residential provision makes a significant impact upon the pupils' academic achievement and attitudes to study. For example, supported homework and a wide range of activities that develop personal effectiveness suited to independent community living, including looking after bedrooms and helping to cook evening meals.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their economic and personal well-being is promoted effectively through the education and the social care provision they receive and by the focussed support to improve their relationships with peers and adults. The pupils gain confidence and increase their enjoyment of school as they respond to frequent opportunities to reflect on their achievements and behaviour. Regular attendance and punctuality indicate the value they place on the education they receive. Pupils' responses to a questionnaire endorsed the positive views they hold, with the majority of parents and carers being similarly positive.

Although there is no school council there are numerous opportunities during assemblies and meal-times for the pupils to air their views. The proprietor has recognised that it may be beneficial to record their comments. Within the curriculum, they study other faiths and cultures from around the world. They regularly support various charities at home and abroad. The pupils respond well to the positive role models provided by education and care staff: racial harmony and understanding of diversity is evident in the daily life of the school.

The pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. Although, occasionally, some pupils find it hard to focus during a whole lesson, attitudes to learning and behaviour improve once issues have been resolved. They respond most positively to their own targets and the school's system that recognises and rewards good behaviour and achievement. Pupils are regularly encouraged to consider how to communicate effectively and to reflect on the impact of their actions on others. During lunch and break times pupils behave well, particularly in the family dining area.

They show a willingness to eat healthy food and participation rates in physical activity are high. Their attendance is good and for many is markedly improved from previous settings. A range of visits are made to local places of interest such as nature reserves, magistrates' courts, galleries, sports and outdoor centres. The annual camping event is welcomed by pupils and does much for their social development and confidence in unfamiliar settings. Several pupils are members of local community groups including the Sea and Army Cadets. Members of the community representing local services also visit the school. All pupils benefit from a rich programme of after-school activities.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The school safeguards pupils well. All staff receive regular training on child protection and the designated person has received training from the local Safeguarding Children Board. The school's recently amended central staff register meets requirements, as does its procedures for appointing new staff.

The provision for the pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. The school works closely with parents, carers, and relevant agencies to promote the pupils' well-being. Care and education staff hold regular meetings, including 'handover meetings' twice a day, to share news about the pupils' progress. The school goes to great lengths to ensure that new pupils settle in and uses referral information as well as their own initial assessments to establish appropriate education and behaviour support plans. The small group and individual attention provided also has a positive impact upon the pupils' development. The school, in liaison with care staff, is effective in promoting regular attendance and a prompt start to the school day. As a result, attendance rates are markedly improved from previous settings.

The school's policies promote the pupils' health, safety and welfare effectively. The supervision of pupils and risk assessments are appropriate within school, during off-site visits and after school. Staff encourage pupils to follow healthy lifestyles, for example, healthy options in the breakfast club and regular opportunities for physical exercise. The school has well established links with Connexions, an external advice agency, enable the pupils to understand options after school. They also address the importance of making sensible choices in relation to drugs. Regular visitors from the community and good relationships with staff ensure that pupils know that they can talk to trusted adults.

The school's comprehensive policies for the promotion of good behaviour and for administering first aid are implemented well. All accidents, incidents and interventions by staff are recorded in detail. The systems to manage challenging behaviours are effective. Systematic checks on equipment, attention to fire safety and prompt on-site maintenance ensure that the pupils are in a safe environment. However, the admission register does not contain all the required information, as was identified at the time of the last inspection. Similarly, the school still does not routinely supply all referring authorities with an annual statement of how funding received for pupils placed has been allocated. The one response from a referring authority indicated satisfaction with the school's work. The school has planned well to increase accessibility under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and will be drawing up a further plan to review the possibility of other improvements to access.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The residential provision was judged to be good, and National Minimum Standards were met.

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:

- maintain an admission register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 3(9)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- submit to the local authority, and on request to the Secretary of State, an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of registered pupils who are wholly or partly funded by the local authority, (paragraph 6(7)).

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:

- improvement of the assessment of pupils' progress by the recording and reporting of the small steps between National Curriculum levels
- involvement of pupils in the assessment of their own work
- consideration of wider accreditation of studies already undertaken by pupils.

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	Owlswick School		
DCSF number	845/6007		
Unique reference number	114660		
Type of school	Special		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1981		
Age range of pupils	10-19		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 7	Girls: 0	Total: 7
Number of boarders	Boys: 7	Girls: 0	Total: 7
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 7	Girls: 0	Total: 7
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 5	Girls: 0	Total: 5
Annual fees (boarders)	£70,000-£100,000 (38weeks – 52weeks)		
Address of school			
Telephone number			
Fax number			
Email address			
Headteacher	Mr A K Harper		
Proprietor	Mr AK and Ms J Harper		
Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell		
Dates of inspection	27 January 2009		