

Underley Garden School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	909/6044
Unique Reference Number	112461
URN and social care	SC036524
Inspection number	331310
Inspection dates	4–5 February 209
Reporting inspector	Caroline Broomhead HMI
Social care inspector	Stewart Waddell

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.

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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.

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

Underley Garden School is a residential special school for pupils aged 9 to 19 years who have complex needs including moderate or severe learning and communication difficulties and associated social and emotional needs. Many also have additional health problems. All the pupils are placed and funded by local authorities and all but one have statements of special educational needs. There are 42 pupils on roll.

The school opened in 1990. In 2006 the owners reorganised the provision with a resulting change in the needs of the pupil population at the school. Those pupils with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties transferred to the sister school on the same site. In 2007 the school was purchased by its present proprietors, Acorn Care and Education. A significant restructuring of the workforce took place in 2008. A new senior leadership team structure was established and in autumn 2008 the roles and responsibilities of care staff and learning support staff were revised. The school was last inspected in 2006 and its most recent boarding inspection was in July 2008.

Evaluation of the school

Underley Garden School is a good school which despite recent significant staff changes has gone from strength to strength since the last inspection. The pupils enjoy school and appreciate the good care they receive. The school provides a good standard of education and as a result of the good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching the pupils make good progress in their learning. The senior leaders have established high expectations and the impact of the changes they have made can be seen in the improvements to pupils' learning and behaviour. The provision is kept under regular review and the school has detailed plans for further improvement. The school takes seriously its responsibilities for safeguarding pupils' well-being. The quality of boarding was judged to be good. The proprietors have made significant improvements to the residential and school accommodation and facilities and these

are welcomed by the pupils. The school meets all the independent school regulations and all the National Minimum Standards.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. The school successfully achieves its aim of providing a personalised curriculum for each pupil, at the same time ensuring there is appropriate breadth and balance. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught and as pupils move into Key Stage 4 they have a choice of options at different levels to suit their interests and abilities as well as the opportunity to study more vocational courses such as childcare or horticulture. At post-16 the emphasis changes again to provide opportunities for pupils to further develop their independent living skills in realistic settings, at the same time continuing to promote development of basic literacy, numeracy, communication and social skills. Personal, social and health education is firmly established across the school and residential settings and joint planning between staff helps to address individual health and emotional needs. Pupils attend link courses at local colleges and undertake work experience placements in line with their interests. In response to the changing pupil population, the school has extended the range of accreditation which pupils can achieve and now includes GCSE, Entry Level Certificates, OCR Accreditation for Life and Living (ALL), National Open College (NOCN) Step Up, AQA unit awards as well as a range of specific qualifications such as British Gymnastics Level 1 in trampolining. Significant improvements have been made to provision for information and communication technology (ICT) including a well-equipped ICT suite and interactive whiteboards and personal computers in classrooms. Extra curricular activities in the school and the local area provide pupils with an interesting and enjoyable range of options to develop good skills for adult life.

The school has introduced a very good approach to curriculum planning which provides a clear structure for teachers' planning at all levels. This is in the process of being applied to all subjects and has already shown the direct impact it is having on improving pupils' learning.

Teaching and assessment are good. The majority of lessons seen were good with some examples of excellent practice. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong and this leads to greater challenge for pupils. For example in ICT lessons where pupils were highly motivated to complete tasks and all had clear individualised plans to successfully create and evaluate websites. In a French lesson the teacher's pronunciation was precise and pupils spoke with appropriate French accents. This contributes significantly to the school's capacity to achieve its aim of all teaching being good or better. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and learning. In classrooms and around the school there is a calm, relaxed atmosphere and pupils want to learn. Those who are new to the school have settled quickly and are enjoying their lessons. The pupils work well together and with the various adults who support them. Support staff are becoming more confident in their new roles and are most effective when they have a clear understanding of lesson objectives and pupils' individual needs. In the best lessons teachers' detailed planning provided support staff with clear guidance on the expected learning outcomes for each pupil which

made a significant difference to pupils' progress. In some lessons support staff take a more passive role limiting their influence.

The quality of teachers' planning varies across the school. Some is excellent with strong links to the curriculum, careful thought given to tasks which will capture pupils' interest and match their ability, and individual plans with suitably challenging targets for all pupils. Very good systems have been put in place for assessing, recording and reporting pupils' progress. Pupils' needs are assessed on entry to the school and detailed learning plans are drawn up identifying their next steps and the support they will need. These are regularly reviewed and adjusted as necessary. Pupils have individual timetables which take account of their needs and interests. However, they are not always clear about their individual learning targets or the progress they are making. The school has established computer-based assessment systems and these are beginning to provide a clearer, up to date and more accessible overview of pupils' progress over time. Senior leaders recognise the potential this has to identify potential underachievement and strengths and areas for improvement in provision.

The pupils make good progress in their learning and are proud of their many achievements. Some make great strides, with noticeable improvements in their attainment, for example in ICT and English. Results in 2008 showed an improvement on the previous year with more pupils achieving external accreditation in line with their abilities. The pupils are encouraged to reach their potential, which for some will be GCSE whereas for others it will be Entry Level certificates. In the residential setting pupils successfully complete unit awards in independent living skills. Those attending college work towards accredited courses such as Open College Level 3 in horticulture. The current Year 11 group are studying for a range of GCSE and Entry Level courses and have high hopes for what they will achieve when they leave school.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The pupils are polite, helpful and greet visitors with a smile. They have generally positive attitudes to school and their behaviour is good. They attend school regularly. Relationships between pupils and staff are firm but friendly. The pupils are aware of the code of conduct and know what is and is not acceptable behaviour. In class and around school they are gently reminded to wait their turn when others are speaking. They are encouraged to make choices and decisions which affect them. With considerate support and guidance from staff they learn the social and communication skills needed in adult life, for example they take part in meetings and successfully complete college and work experience placements. Those with severe communication difficulties are learning to use visual cues to help them to make their needs known in a positive manner and this reduces some of their anxiety. Members of the school council meet regularly and offer their views on possible improvements, for example to the school uniform or additional facilities they would like to have in the bungalows. They have the confidence to speak out and learn that people will listen to them if they are courteous and thoughtful about other people's feelings.

Around the school the pupils are seen to be taking a pride in their environment. The school has achieved the ECO schools silver award and there is a concerted effort to gain the Green Flag status. The pupils participate willingly in activities to improve the environment, such as gardening, and the 'energy inspectors' are diligent in their duties, reminding people when lights have been left on unnecessarily. In the wider community, pupils take part in a variety of community based activities including Sea Cadets. They enjoy taking part in fund raising activities, for example to support the NSPCC. During the year the school organises theme days when the pupils learn about other cultures such as Native American Indians. In the school and residences they learn about different cultural traditions, arts, and music as well as having the opportunity to taste different foods.

Regular assemblies help to promote pupils' self esteem and raise their awareness of their spirituality. They have opportunities to reflect on what they do well as well as on the needs of others less fortunate than themselves. The pupils are interested in their religious education lessons but rarely have an opportunity to make visits out of school to see places of worship which may help them gain more understanding of the wider range of faiths in society.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. The pupils are well cared for and they appreciate the support they receive from staff. There are many opportunities for pupils to take part in sports and other physical activities and they are encouraged and supported to do so. With individual support and guidance from staff they learn about personal safety in the home and out in the community. Rigorous procedures are in place for safeguarding pupils' wellbeing. These include stringent arrangements for recruiting appropriately qualified staff and checking the suitability of staff to work with children. Staff receive appropriate training in line with their roles. The school works hard to liaise with other agencies and professionals to support pupils' emotional and physical wellbeing and the proprietors are recruiting additional educational psychology and speech and language therapy expertise to support the school's holistic approach to meeting individual needs. The school has revised its care and control policy and provided training for staff which promotes a positive approach to encouraging and teaching appropriate behaviour and managing challenging behaviour in a non-confrontational manner. This, along with restructuring of staff roles and more stability in staffing throughout the school day, has led to a significant reduction in the previously high number of recorded incidents, including those involving the use of physical restraint. Senior leaders continue to monitor this closely.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The residential provision was judged to be good and 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.

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:

- use data on pupils' attainment, achievement and behaviour to identify potential underachievement and strengths and areas for improvement in provision
- ensure that pupils are aware of their individual learning targets and what they need to do to achieve them
- provide opportunities for pupils to visit places of worship as part of religious education.

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	Underley Garden School
DCSF number	909/6044
Unique reference number	112461
Type of school	Residential special school
Status	Independent
Date school opened	1990
Age range of pupils	9-19 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 25 Girls: 17 Total: 42
Number of boarders	Boys: 25 Girls: 17 Total: 42
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 24 Girls: 17 Total: 41
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 18 Girls: 11 Total: 29
Annual fees (boarders)	£157,605 – £191,250 (39 weeks) £184,335 - £225,000 (52 weeks)
Address of school	Kirkby Lonsdale Carnforth Lancashire LA6 2DZ
Telephone number	01524271569
Fax number	0152472581
Email address	ugsoffice@underleyschools.co.uk
Headteacher	Ms Ellie Forrest
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education
Reporting inspector	Caroline Broomhead HMI
Dates of inspection	4–5 February 2009