

# Learn 4 Life

## Independent School

### Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	888/6089
Unique Reference Number	129571
Inspection number	331362
Inspection dates	30 April–1 May 2009
Reporting inspector	John Coleman HMI

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

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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.

## Information about the school

Learn 4 Life School is registered to provide for up to 16 secondary age students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Most students are looked after children in the care of local authorities; they reside in children's homes owned and managed by Care Afloat Ltd who also own the school. The children's homes include a narrow boat where education is also provided for short periods. The company also makes use of a yacht for short placements of up to 28 days. The school has two main sites; a shared use community centre and a sea cadet centre which are within walking distance of each other. There are currently six students on roll, of whom three students have a statement of special educational needs. The school was last inspected in November 2006. This report covers the provision of the Learn 4 Life School only. No educational or care provision in other facilities owned by Care Afloat Ltd was inspected.

The school is committed to multi-disciplinary working and aims to ensure that students are able to access their entitlement to full time education. The school states that, *'These aims are achieved by developing in students a sense of self confidence, equipping them with the skills to gain control in their lives, engendering an enjoyment of learning, promoting unconditional acceptance and enabling students to be included in their community'*.

## Evaluation of the school

Learn 4 Life School provides a satisfactory and improving quality of education for students. Students increasingly re-engage with their education due to the positive and productive relationships established between staff and students. Provision for students' personal development is strong and, as a result, students show improving maturity and satisfactory behaviour. Students make good progress in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy because of good teaching in these areas. Students make satisfactory progress in most other subjects because of variations in the quality of the curriculum, and in the skills of the staff who deliver this to students away from the two main sites. The school has made good improvement since the last inspection because of the effective impact of the headteacher's leadership, which has successfully addressed the issues raised in the last inspection report. The school meets the majority of Independent School regulations.

## Quality of education

The overall quality of education is satisfactory. The curriculum and other activities are satisfactory in meeting the range and interests of students. Students are assessed on admission to the school and an Individual Care, Health and Education Plan (ICHEP) is drawn up. A five-stage inclusion strategy is used to risk assess the most suitable individual provision for each student. Students who are most suited to one-to-one teaching provision are based on the community centre site, and students who are assessed as benefiting more from larger teaching groups are taught on the sea cadet site. The curriculum in Key Stage 3 is largely based on the National Curriculum. In Key Stage 4 the school provides two main pathways. Route A provides students with options to gain Entry Level Certificates and GCSE's, whilst Route B provides a vocational element. This provision works well and current students are on track to achieve a range of qualifications. Some students are able to combine aspects of both routes.

Since the last inspection, the school has greatly improved the policies, plans and schemes of work for each area of the curriculum. The core curriculum, English, mathematics, science and personal development in Key Stages 3 and 4, provides well for students and is delivered by teachers on the two main sites. External providers are bought in by the school to provide sport, music and vocational experiences. The students speak highly of this provision. Students based in the community centre for the core subjects of the curriculum, receive some of their education in the care home setting. This part of the curriculum, mainly humanities subjects, is ineffectively implemented and is delivered by care assistants. Similarly, students who are based on the narrow boat receive a curriculum of variable quality. The monitoring of all curriculum provision away from the two main sites is inadequate because of the lack of teaching capacity currently in the school. The proprietor is taking urgent steps to appoint a new teacher to rectify this shortfall.

The effectiveness of teaching and assessment in meeting the full range of students' needs is satisfactory. Teaching of the basic skills for students is good, although where learning support is provided to teachers in these lessons, the care assistants are often passive. There is also considerable variation in subject knowledge in the teaching of other subjects because recent staff changes have led to a reduction in the proportion of lessons delivered by qualified teachers. Currently, an increased amount of the curriculum is taught by care assistants in the home setting. Whilst their outline lesson plans are produced by education staff, the skills and subject knowledge of the care assistants is insufficient to provide effectively for students' learning needs in other subjects. Teachers are very committed and dedicated to providing the very best learning for students. They show high levels of patience and perseverance when students exhibit very challenging behaviour. Teaching is characterised by good relationships where the calm, considered approach of the teacher is welcomed and respected by students. The attitudes to learning of students are improving due to the consistent encouragement by all staff which builds

students' self-esteem and confidence. Lessons in the core subjects are good because teachers have good subject knowledge and they plan activities carefully taking into account individual student needs. Lesson plans vary in quality in the use and effectiveness of precise intentions for students' learning. Targets are used well to focus students' learning and they are knowledgeable about these. In the non core subjects the quality of teaching varies because of the lack of teachers' subject expertise and the need for care assistants to deliver lessons. In many lessons, care staff take a passive role and there are frequent missed opportunities to involve all staff in discussions and debate. For example, in the one-to-one sessions, students are unable to fully develop their thinking skills because they have no opportunities for group discussion.

Assessment of students' needs and their progress is well structured and links very well with students' personal, pastoral, health and/or special educational needs plans. Targets are used very effectively to focus students' improvement in behaviour and learning. Regular reviews ensure that targets are kept up-to-date and are appropriate. The management of assessment procedures is a strength of the school. Certificates are used well to praise and reward students' achievements. Assessment packs provided by the school for use in the provision on the boat are thorough and well prepared. However, knowledge of the National Curriculum and of students' learning styles is a prerequisite for its effective implementation, and care staff have received too little educational training to equip them for this task.

Students make satisfactory progress in their learning overall. The amount of progress made by students varies enormously day-by-day and lesson-by-lesson. Progress is best in the core subjects where teaching is often good. Progress is least in the areas of the curriculum delivered in the home environment and on the boat due to the lack of knowledge and understanding about the curriculum, and about effective teaching methods. Although students' attendance is improving, about one in four lessons are missed due to absence. Despite good relationships between staff and students, there are regular barriers to learning created by the students themselves. They fail, for example, to make the most of all their lessons by displaying poor concentration and a lack of application to the tasks set by teachers. Good progress is made by students in their personal development.

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

The quality of provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Students' moral development is good. The school effectively implements a policy of *unconditional acceptance* and students generally abide by the school's rules and boundaries. The consistent application of this approach by all staff leads to satisfactory behaviour from students overall. Students often arrive with a history of non attendance at school and consequently, whilst the attendance rate of 77% appears poor, it represents significant improvement. Students say they mostly like school and, for those who stay at the school for a prolonged period, their attendance is better than the school's overall average figure. Students enjoy much of

their education and appreciate the efforts of staff to increase their personal self-worth. Spiritual development is good in this regard. Opportunities for students to develop social skills are often restricted by the isolation caused by the one-to-one lessons. Most students do not interact with their local communities due to their individual needs, and as a result, the development of their positive contribution is limited. Many students are new to the area and it is difficult for students to access appropriate peer groups. Students' economic well-being is well provided for through the acquisition of basic skills.

Cultural development is satisfactory. The school's programme for personal development includes educating about British institutions, a range of faiths and religions and about other cultures. The school provides trips to places of educational interest and external speakers visit to talk to the students.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of students are satisfactory. The school has a range of suitable policies and procedures in place which meet statutory requirements, and their effective implementation helps ensure that students are cared for and kept safe. Risk assessments are regularly carried out and the school maintains logs for behaviour, bullying and incidents of racism as required by government regulations. All the necessary safeguards for child protection and first aid are in place and staff training is up-to-date. The school monitors students' attendance very well, compiling a thorough analysis, but daily attendance registers are completed in pencil and this practice does not meet the required regulation. The curriculum provides education for students about healthy eating, and about safe practices regarding drugs, sex and alcohol. Most students say they feel safe in school. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All the required checks are made with regard to staff appointments. A single central register records all the information appropriately including Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks.

## School's premises and accommodation

The school uses a variety of premises. The community centre is a building which provides 'UK on-line' internet facilities for local people and also basic skills courses for adults. This occupies the ground floor. Most of the school's provision is located on the first and second floors. This site complies with all the regulations required. The sea cadet site is a recent addition to the school's provision and offers larger classroom spaces in a building which is not occupied by others during school sessions. This site does not have suitable outdoor spaces for daily play and exercise, and too few additional washroom facilities in order to comply with the regulations. However there is good external provision for sport and exercise. The proprietor has advanced plans to carry out the much needed indoor works. On this inspection, it

was not possible to visit the narrow boat though this is inspected as a registered children's home by Ofsted. This is also the case for each of the children's homes in which students reside.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school has a good prospectus and a variety of written brochures which parents, carers and local authorities receive. The school conducts regular reviews of students' progress and provides written reports for all parties. The responses of placing local authorities to the inspection questionnaire are very positive, and express a good deal of satisfaction with the quality of education and care provided by the school. Parent/carers questionnaires are mostly positive but with mixed views about how much students enjoy school, students' behaviour, the provision of homework and issues about health and exercise. The inspection judges that each of these areas is at least satisfactory. Students' responses are also mostly positive, but they express some concern over lessons which are not always taught by teachers. The inspection agrees with this concern.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The procedures meet the requirements of government regulations.

## 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 *(delete if not applicable)*

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- effectively implement all its curriculum policies, plans and schemes of work on each of its sites (paragraph 1(2))
- ensure that all students learn and make progress on each of its sites (paragraph 1(2)(i)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for teaching and assessment (standard 2 ) and must:

- ensure the consistent quality of lesson planning and the effectiveness of teaching methods adopted (paragraph 1(3)(c)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- maintain attendance registers in ink (paragraph 3(9)).

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

- provide sufficient washrooms for staff (paragraph 5(k))
- ensure there are appropriate arrangements for providing outside space for students to play safely (paragraph 5(t)).

## What the school could do to improve further

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

- Improve the guidance and support available to students in lessons by increasing the involvement of assistants.
- Ensure there is a consistent quality of learning across the Quarry Bank, Sea Cadet, narrow boat and children's home locations.



# 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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## School details

Name of school	Learn 4 Life		
DCSF number	888/6089		
Unique reference number	129571		
Type of school	Special		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	July 2005		
Age range of pupils	11–16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 3	Girls: 3	Total: 6
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 3	Girls: 0	Total: 3
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 3	Girls: 3	Total: 6
Annual fees (day pupils)	£28,500		
Address of school	364 Ormskirk Road		
	Tanhouse		
	Skelmersdale		
	Lancashire		
	WN8 9AL		
Telephone number	01695 558698		
Fax number	01695 558698		
Email address	learn4life.ed@gmail.com		
Headteacher	Ms Elaine Booth		
Proprietor	Mr Danny Curran		
Reporting inspector	John Coleman HMI		
Dates of inspection	30 April–1 May 2009		