

The Old School

Independent Special School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	937/6092
Unique Reference Number	125790
Inspection number	332128
Inspection dates	3 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Saleem Hussain

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).

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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.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focussed principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding students and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

The Old School makes special education day provision for girls and boys aged between 7 and 16 years with severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school was opened in the year 2003. It aims to *'provide a seamless education which regenerates a love of learning, self-confidence and the ability to cope with change as well as control over feelings and behaviour'*. At the time of inspection there were 41 students on roll. The school is based on two sites in Nuneaton, in Warwickshire: a lower school which was recently approved for students in Key Stage 2, and an upper school for older students. All the students are referred by local authorities from different parts of the country and have statements of special educational need. The vast majority of students are from a White British heritage. There are no students with English as a second language. Attainment on entry is almost always below or well below that expected for students' ages. The school had its last full inspection in January 2006.

Evaluation of the school

The overall quality of education at The Old School is outstanding, as an exceptional curriculum and outstanding teaching fully meet students' needs and underpin the school's success. The caring, encouraging ethos enables students to learn particularly well and outstanding behaviour and attitudes are reflective of very skilful student management by staff. Provision for the overall welfare, health and safety of students is outstanding. The school enjoys a very good reputation amongst parents and local authorities because they value the outstanding progress students make in their academic and personal development. The headteacher at the upper school site and senior staff have worked tirelessly to ensure that all the regulations are met and that improvements since the last inspection, when the school was judged as very good with outstanding features, have been good.

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding because it is broad ranging, imaginative and rich in opportunities for students to pursue academic and personal interests. The curriculum meets everyone's needs particularly well. It is common to find teachers taking a broad approach to the promotion of students' learning. For instance, an observed science lesson included opportunities to develop speaking, writing and information and communication technology (ICT) skills as students carried out an investigation about the effect of cool bags on food. Schemes of work are in place for all subjects and individual lesson planning is very good. Provision for literacy, numeracy, art, music, personal, social, health and citizenship education is very effective. A considerable number of students gained good or very good Entry Level GCSE certificates in the last school year, including students in Years 8 and 9. A small number gained particularly good full GCSE passes. Students especially enjoy the practical learning opportunities on offer and this is reflected in excellent achievements in art and music.

The strong link with the Connexions service makes a significant contribution to students' personal development and careers education. The oldest students thrive on the good opportunities for gaining work-related experiences. For instance, they take advantage of strong links with a local college where they can take part in 'taster' courses in vocational areas of their choice. All Year 11 students took part in personalized work experiences in the last school year and they all left school to take up further education places.

Students at both sites enjoy the extra dimension to their learning provided through educational trips. For instance, students visit art galleries and museums and this supports their cultural development very well. Visitors include theatre groups and students reported that they enjoyed the recent performance of Romeo and Juliet. Other visitors include artists and African drummers.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding overall, representing an improvement since the last inspection. This ensures that students make outstanding progress and achieve particularly well. Teaching at the upper school (where most students are based) is consistently of the highest order. The lower school has only been in operation for one school year, but it is clear that teaching is good and improving rapidly. The headteachers and senior staff at both sites have implemented an excellent programme of monitoring, evaluation and professional development. New teachers are provided with very good support and they quickly settle into their roles. Characteristic of teaching at both sites is the excellent attention to developing basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. This has resulted in first class progress in these areas. Adults in the classroom work together very effectively, for instance, in supporting less able students. Lessons are always purposeful and students are very well informed about their individual learning targets. Lessons move along quickly and, as a result, students get through much work. Classroom resources are plentiful

in all subjects and they are used very effectively by teachers. Interactive whiteboards are very well used to illustrate teaching points. Students are highly motivated and work hard because they are constantly praised and rewarded for their achievements. Students say that 'lessons are fun and it seems as though the adults are with us every step of the way, giving us the right help when we need it'.

Assessment procedures are very effective. Records of progress are very detailed, making note of all achievements, however small. Students are assessed regularly and their achievements recorded in their personal files which are called 'I matter'. The use of information to develop the curriculum and present challenge for all abilities is very good.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

The school is very successful in nurturing students' personal development. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students are prepared especially well for their future lives and economic well-being.

There are many chances for students to develop self-knowledge and self-confidence. Every opportunity is taken to raise their self-esteem and it is clear that they enjoy their learning very much because they feel as though they matter. Students learn to accept responsibility for their behaviour very quickly. The standard of behaviour in and around school is outstanding. Discussions and debates on issues such as human rights, discrimination and justice enable students to develop a very strong moral code and to respect the law. Students develop a good awareness of public services and local and national institutions. The majority of students have made very good improvements in their attendance compared to that of their former schools and overall it is good. However, rates of improvement at the upper school are not quite as good as the lower school in a small but significant minority of cases.

Adults are excellent role models for students. Students are keen to help others and carry out monitor duties and other tasks, making a very good contribution to the school and the wider community. Students show very high levels of respect for the values, traditions and beliefs of others. A very good example of personal development was seen during an assembly about 'priority and perspective' led by the headteacher at the upper school. Students enthusiastically took part in a discussion about common strands in people's religious beliefs and the importance of all their work for charities. There was pin drop silence as two students led the prayer at the end. The school's very good work to raise awareness about different beliefs and cultures makes a significant contribution to promoting racial harmony.

Safeguarding students' welfare, health and safety

Students receive outstanding care and all the required records and policies are in place. Procedures for safeguarding and child protection are robust and regularly reviewed. There are clear policies for the recruitment and appointment of staff. Rigorous checks are carried out and fully completed. The school maintains a very clear single central record of Criminal Records Bureau checks at an enhanced level.

The school has also implemented appropriate health, fire and general safety policies. These include procedures to assess and manage safety risks related to the premises, taught subjects and educational trips. Arrangements for dealing with accidents and emergencies are well detailed and both sites have strong provision for giving first aid.

Much work is done with students of all ages to raise their awareness of health and safety matters. Consequently, students have a very good understanding of how to lead healthy and safe lifestyles. Opportunities are taken to discuss issues such as the need to eat sensibly, take regular exercise and avoid the damaging effects of smoking and drugs abuse. Students are very well supervised and outstanding behaviour is promoted at all times. For instance, many members of staff are on duty at break-times to ensure that students play safely. Relationships at all levels are very strong. Much staff interaction with students at break-times makes a significant contribution to students' social development. A very effective system of rewards and sanctions is in place and there is a healthy spirit of competition to earn gift vouchers and mini trophies for good conduct, effort and achievement. Both parents and students say that bullying is not a problem. These factors make a significant contribution to the calm and happy working atmosphere in the school, where everyone is treated with respect. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and has an appropriate accessibility plan.

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 point for development:

- the improvement of the level of attendance at the upper school.

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	The Old School		
DCSF number	937/6092		
Unique reference number	125790		
Type of school	Special day school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1 May 2003		
Age range of students	7–16		
Gender of students	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 29	Girls: 12	Total: 41
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 29	Girls: 12	Total: 41
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 3	Girls: 0	Total: 3
Annual fees (day students)	£45,080		
Address of school	Church End Ansley Nuneaton Warwickshire CV10 0QR		
Telephone number	02476 394801		
Fax number	02476 396535		
Email address	polly_garrett@hotmail.com		
Headteacher	Ms Pauline Garrett		
Proprietor	OS Education Limited		
Reporting inspector	Saleem Hussain		
Date of inspection	3 October 2008		