

SWAAY

Independent Special School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	867/6580
Unique Reference Number	110178
Inspection number	333819
Inspection dates	30 June–1 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Anne Duffy 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

SWAAY School is an independent day special school located on two sites in Berkshire. It is part of a residential provision which provides both education and treatment for up to 18 boys, aged between 11 and 18 years, who have specific social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Almost all have a statement of special educational needs. They come to the school from all areas of the United Kingdom and all are looked after children, under the care of their respective local authority. Students come with a history of interrupted schooling and generally remain at the school for a minimum of two years. The school operates collaboratively as part of a therapeutic community provided by SWAAY Ltd.

The school aims: 'to work together to support the whole development of each young person towards responsible adulthood. Through practice based on the SWAAY philosophy we offer the highest levels of care; an individualised curriculum for each young person to reach his full educational potential and a personalised programme for each to improve his social and emotional skills.'

The school was last inspected in June 2006. Since then it has moved into new premises and there has been a change of headteacher.

Evaluation of the school

The school provides students with a satisfactory education which is supported by high levels of care. Curricular provision is good. Underpinned by the therapeutic approach of the organisation, it meets the needs of students well so that their motivation and behaviour improve during their time at the school. As a result, although they make satisfactory progress overall, their progress towards becoming individuals able to take their place in society, is good. Assessment and teaching are satisfactory. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, in the context of their significant behavioural and social needs, is good. The caring ethos of the school is reflected in the vigilance and good relationships demonstrated by the staff. It is supported by good procedures for the welfare, health and general safety of its students, a priority area for the school given the volatile and vulnerable nature of some of its students. The school has successfully addressed a number of unmet regulations which were identified by the last inspection and now meets all but two of the regulations.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. Its particular strengths lie in its responsiveness to the complex needs of the student population, and the focus upon students' social, emotional and therapeutic needs. Since the last inspection the school has continued to develop a broader range of accreditation. It works hard to provide both curricular and extra-curricular opportunities which match individual students' interests such as providing a six-week course in agriculture at a local college. Cross-curricular links are relatively underdeveloped. For example, when a student is studying the Lotus company for 'science in the workplace', this is not carried across to link with the work he is doing on motor vehicle maintenance in a way that would make both subjects more meaningful and interesting.

The centre makes good links with support agencies, colleges and, as far as possible, work-experience providers. As a result, good arrangements are in place for students to receive the guidance and experiences they need to prepare them for moving to the next stage in their education or working life. Good opportunities to develop appropriate skills are provided and accredited through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and through the development of key skills, for which the school has gained the Basic Skills award.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory overall. Strengths in teaching include the long-term planning, which takes into account the demands of examination courses, and the personal understanding that each member of staff has of each student. In the best lessons, students stay on task and are engaged in their learning as a result of good pace and positive interactions. They show the most interest in their subject when they are engaged in lively discussion which then results in activity. Teachers use their knowledge of examination courses well to plan and prepare their lessons. However, written planning and recording of outcomes is not consistent and there is a lack of clarity in the use of learning objectives. As a result, what students are going to do, rather than learn, often becomes the focus and opportunities for independent learning are missed. Assessment systems are in place and good use is made of individual and personal education plans to set long-term targets. However, shorter-term target setting and assessment is not always used to inform teaching and hence ensure that all students learn and make as much progress as they can. Some lessons are too reliant upon worksheets and students themselves say that resources are limited. Limited facilities for practical science and technology work mean that students sometimes have to complete 'virtual' rather than practical tasks. However, good use is made of information and communication technology to enhance learning and students work well with staff to research areas of interest through the internet.

Taking into account the history and ability of the students when they join the school, progress overall by the end of Key Stage 4 is satisfactory and for some individuals it is good. Staff work hard to build success where possible with ASDAN, Entry Level Certificate and GCSE courses so that the majority of students leave school having gained accreditation in more than one subject. Post-16 students benefit from being

able to improve their grades or take forward particular areas of study. Completed modular courses and predications indicate that students have achieved particularly well in their ASDAN courses with some individual successes in other subjects such as mathematics and art at grades B to G at GCSE. All leavers are due to move on to further education in the next academic year.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students, which often starts from a very low base, is good. Attendance is excellent and students speak warmly of the positive, and at times very direct, impact of the school. This is sometimes expressed as what has been most noticeable for them, such as when one student said, 'I haven't hit anyone since I came to SWAAY'.

Many students enjoy the opportunity to develop skills that they did not know they had, for example, in art, music and creative writing. Others respond well to the lessons learnt through ASDAN projects, and in the effective personal skills development programme, where they are encouraged to consider and acknowledge differing points of view. They develop an awareness of other people's lives and cultures through projects such as 'Black History Month'. Students' behaviour is satisfactory. Although some find tolerance hard, the example set by every member of staff creates a positive and encouraging atmosphere to which students gradually respond. As a result, although always behaving well remains difficult for many, verbal or physical outbursts cause minimum disruption to the calm atmosphere which pervades the school. Older students demonstrate that they are able to reflect upon their experiences and they take full advantage of work experience both within, or, where possible, outside the organisation. Group and whole-school discussions are taken seriously and offer students the opportunity to contribute positively to the school community and develop skills which will help their future economic and emotional well-being.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety in school is good. Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place to safeguard students' safety and welfare, including the required amount of training on child protection. Due to difficulties on the part of the training provider, staff training on this aspect has not taken place this year but is arranged for the beginning of the new school year. The school has robust procedures for tackling incidents, including those involving bullying. Staff are aware of how to deal with incidents appropriately and it is commendable that what is often very challenging behaviour is dealt with without recourse to the use of restraint. Students appear at ease and very open in their relationships with each other and with staff. The quality of supervision is extremely good and students generally feel safe. Although they would like freer access to the internet, students do their best to understand why it has to be limited. The needs of students with additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities, such as attention deficit disorder, are met well because

of the school's strong focus on individual requirements. Although limited on site, there are ample opportunities for students to take part in outdoor exercise and they make good use of local facilities. Relaxed and shared lunch times make a good attempt at steering students towards a healthy and balanced diet, although some find it hard to lose their preference for snack-type food. Students are sensitively guided towards an awareness of other aspects of healthy living, including acceptable attitudes to sex, drinking and drugs. Fire procedures and risk assessments for educational visits are employed well. First aid policies and procedures meet the regulations.

The school has developed an accessibility plan which complies with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school keeps the required central register and checks all staff to ensure their suitability to work with children. Visiting therapists, psychiatry and psychology professionals are also appropriately included in the register maintained by the head office.

School's premises and accommodation

The school's main site for Key Stage 4 and post-16 students is suitable, generally well-maintained and appropriately used. The school now provides suitable accommodation for students who are ill, an unmet regulation in the last inspection. However, all but one of the washrooms are used by both students and staff which is not permitted by the regulations. The school has less control over the Key Stage 3 premises which it shares with a local primary school but careful supervision ensures that any shared use of facilities does not pose a risk. On both sites, an understandable wariness by the school of possible damage resulting from an angry outburst means that displays are neither very inspiring nor conducive to exciting learning.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The organisation provides comprehensive information on its website and there is an informative prospectus although this does not currently contain the address and telephone number of the school or information about the availability of the most recent examination results. The reporting system, which includes annual reviews and reviews for children who are looked after, help carers and local authorities to be informed about students' progress.

Procedures for handling complaints

Procedures for dealing with complaints are available and compliant with 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.

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

- ensure that there are clearly designated separate washrooms for use by staff and students on the main site ((paragraph 5(k)).

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

- provide particulars of the school's address and telephone number as well as the name of the headteacher (paragraph 6(2)(a))
- provide, or make clear that current and prospective parents/carers may request, particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations (paragraph 6(2)(i)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- establish consistent approaches to lesson delivery so that learning objectives are clear, shared with students, and used to evaluate how much they have learnt
- provide professional development opportunities for teachers to explore and experience current good practice so that, where appropriate, they can update their teaching styles, lesson presentation and delivery with increasing impact on students' learning and progress
- investigate ways in which resources, curricular-related displays and displays of students' work can be used to enhance learning whilst being protected from possible damage.

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 students		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of students' needs			✓	
How well students make progress in their learning			✓	

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of students			✓	

Welfare, health and safety of students

The overall welfare, health and safety of students		✓		
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School details

Name of school	SWAAY
DCSF number	867/6580
Unique reference number	110178
Type of school	Secondary special
Status	Independent
Date school opened	May 1994
Age range of students	11–18
Gender of students	Boys
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 17
Number of students with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 16
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 17
Fees (day students)	£881.84 ¹
Address of organisation	PO Box 2929 Earley Reading RG6 7XQ
Telephone number	0118 926 1010
Fax number	0118 966 5454
Email address	calexandrou@swaay.co.uk
Headteacher	Chris Alexandrou
Proprietor	Lesley Payne and Roger Gibson
Reporting inspector	Anne Duffy HMI
Dates of inspection	30 June–1 July 2009

¹ Estimated average weekly fee for education, as all fees are tailored to the needs of the individual.