

Kingsdown Secondary School

Independent Special School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	306/6089
Unique Reference Number	131721
Inspection number	333848
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2009
Reporting inspector	David Young

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

Kingsdown Secondary School is an independent, day, special school that is registered to provide education for up to 29 boys and girls aged 11 to 16 who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). The school was established in 2001 and occupies two sites in the London borough of Croydon. Most of the students are now educated at the Orchard Road site which opened in September 2006. The school is in the ownership of a limited company, McRae Residential Care Services.

Currently 20 students are on the school roll, all of whom are boys. Most students have a statement of special educational needs (SEN) and all have a history of non-attendance or failure at their former schools. The school prioritises the education of looked after children. Students display a wide range of attainment. Several show average or above average academic potential whilst others have learning difficulties. All function below the levels expected for their ages. The school aims to "nurture young people's confidence in order that they may embark upon a new journey through learning." All students are funded by their local authorities and generally attend, some on a short term basis, from Croydon and neighbouring local authorities. The school was last inspected by Ofsted in September 2006.

Evaluation of the school

Kingsdown provides a good quality of education for its students, including an appropriate emphasis on both personal and academic development. The appointment of an outstanding new headteacher has revitalised leadership in the school and resulted in significant improvements since the last inspection. Students, despite their many personal barriers to success, make satisfactory progress and increasingly achieve appropriate external accreditation for their academic and practical work. The school meets all but one of the regulatory requirements.

Quality of education

The school provides a good curriculum, which has the flexibility to respond to the wide range of needs of individual students. Provision is made for all subjects of the National Curriculum, enabling the school to meet the full requirements of the students' statements of special educational need. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Schemes of work for all subjects have been revised recently to a

common format; these provide a sound basis for planning individual lesson objectives. The Key Stage 4 curriculum includes suitable practical activities, including the Croydon AutoBike Scheme and the Prince's Trust xl club. Students enjoy these activities while also gaining external accreditation through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) bronze, silver and gold awards. Opportunities for external accreditation are increasing, for example, some Year 10 students are working towards the possibility of GCSE examinations in seven subjects, together with additional unit awards and practical accreditations. Creative opportunities for community projects, including the design and creation of a school garden, enable students to develop meaningful, practical and social skills. Arrangements for external college or work placements are not easy to secure but are considered on the basis of each student's suitability.

Effective provision is made at the Lodge Road site for the induction of students who have difficulty accessing the full requirements of the formal curriculum. This provision is ably led by the teacher-in-charge, ensuring appropriate baseline assessment of students' capabilities and a strong emphasis on the basic skills. This enables them to progress to the main site, or to another school in the case of temporary placements. Individual education plans are carefully constructed, taking account of the full range of factors impacting on students' learning and behaviour; these are well informed by dialogue with appropriate external agencies. Individual students have clear targets, which aim for progress within their behaviour, social development and academic achievement. Students understand these and benefit from the identified small steps to improvement. A tutorial programme and the allocation of personal tutors provide further support for students to focus on their learning.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and a sound awareness of the individual needs of students. The majority of lessons have clear objectives which are shared with the students. Where teaching is good, lessons include a sequence of activities which are designed to allow students to experience success and then move on. The most successful lessons make good use of stimulating visual resources and include practical activities. Writing frames, learning games and short focused activities are used well to retain attention and motivation. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively to enable students to research, design and present their work to a good standard. Interactive whiteboards and regular use of computers are increasingly becoming part of the school's learning culture. Where learning is less successful, students' preferred learning styles are not taken sufficiently into account. Students have insufficient access to stimulating resources; there is too much dependence on the written word, and limited opportunities to contribute their thoughts and ideas. Occasionally teachers struggle to contain challenging behaviour and the quality of learning is disrupted. However, teachers respond with patience and are generally consistent in implementing school strategies for behaviour management.

The school is developing a comprehensive system for tracking students' progress. As a result, the use of National Curriculum attainment levels has become an important part of feedback to students in some subjects. In the best practice, marking is used effectively to help students understand the next small steps required to consolidate their learning or move their work on to the next level. The assessment and tracking system is beginning to be used to evaluate the real progress that students make; this combines measures from their personal and academic progress. Students make satisfactory progress by the end of Key Stage 4, achieving external accreditation through GCSE, the Unit Award Scheme and ASDAN awards. For many students, this represents good progress, including one student who recently gained a GCSE grade C in ICT at the end of Year 10.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. The school has created a strong sense of community. The school's expectations for behaviour and social development are constantly reinforced through shared mealtimes, joint activities in the games room and conversations in the external play area. Students respond positively and maintain satisfactory behaviour that for most is an improvement on their previous experience. Moral and social issues are regularly addressed through citizenship and the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Most students are admitted exhibiting a variety of challenging behaviours; committed teamwork and consistent care enable them to face up to and begin to address their personal issues. Most students have a positive view about their experience in the school and attendance for the great majority is good and is a significant improvement when compared to their previous placement.

An impressive feature of the school's success is the extent to which the proprietor, teachers, teaching assistants, administrators and site management staff support each other in all aspects of the management and education of the students. One Year 11 student was very articulate in voicing, in a reflective manner, his appreciation for the way in which the school allowed him to put his past behind him and focus on a positive future.

The citizenship programme, together with themes covered in assemblies and through the curriculum, ensures a developing understanding of society and democratic processes. International themes are used to encourage participation and contributions from students, including for example, consideration of Remembrance Day, the terrorist attacks on Mumbai and Holocaust Memorial Day. Students are prepared to voice their views and opinions as in a discussion about different types of discrimination. Students contribute to the school and wider community through, for example, serving at mealtimes, assisting staff and each other to manage incidents, and contributing to a charity collection for Comic Relief. Despite the challenges, the school continues to seek ways of broadening participation; students, during the inspection, visited the local supermarket to plan provisions for the journey to the forthcoming school residential visit to Butlins at Bognor Regis. Recent student

winners of the Jack Petchey Award scheme have chosen to use the prize money to provide recreational facilities for the school. All students participated in a stimulating visit to the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Through the curriculum, the Prince's Trust activities and because of their developing self-esteem and enjoyment of school, students are helped to prepare appropriately for the next stage of their education or employment.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of students are good. There is thorough attention to risk assessments for all school activities. The school fulfils its belief that it is 'risk aware but not risk averse'. This is also evident in the quality of safeguarding policies and procedures. The dedication and commitment of the proprietor are clearly demonstrated in the implementation of appropriate policies for the recruitment of staff and attention to health and safety throughout the premises. A recent consultant's report to the governors illustrates the school's commitment to ensure appropriate action planning and risk assessment for health and safety. Staff, including the designated safeguarding officers, have received up-to-date training that is consistently implemented across both sites.

Students have good opportunities for physical activities, which are enjoyed with enthusiasm. Nutritious meals, endorsed by students' questionnaire responses, are provided at lunchtimes; breakfast is enjoyed before the start of lessons. Curriculum themes, including PSHE and cookery lessons, emphasise the requirements of a healthy lifestyle.

The school's three year access plan fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Thorough vetting procedures are implemented to ensure the suitability of all staff and governors to work with children. All checks on staff suitability are recorded in the required single, central register.

School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises and accommodation at both sites provide a suitable and safe environment for teaching and learning. The accommodation has been continuously developed to increase facilities for learning and recreation and the next phase of development is planned for this summer holiday. Specialist facilities for science, ICT, cookery and physical education are used effectively, as is the external play area.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The quality of information for parents and others has been improved significantly and now meets all but one of the regulatory requirements. The school prospectus provides parents with an appropriate overview of the school's provision together with details of how additional information may be obtained. Comprehensive annual reports on students' progress are provided for parents and carers and the school contributes effectively to the annual review of students' statements of special educational needs. The small number of parents, who responded to the questionnaire, whilst aware that students' behaviour can be disruptive, are supportive of the provision made by the school and the progress their children are making. The school does not provide an annual account of expenditure to placing authorities, although these details are agreed and documented in appropriate contracts.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has appropriate procedures for handling complaints, which are made available to parents and students. There was one formal complaint in the last year which was resolved appropriately by the proprietor.

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 the one listed below.

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

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

What the school could do to improve further

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

- ensure that assessment data and advice to students on the next steps to improve, are used consistently by all staff

- develop a consistent understanding amongst staff about students' preferred learning styles and active learning strategies
- widen students' opportunities to accept responsibility and contribute actively to the school community.

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	Kingsdown Secondary School		
DCSF number	306/6089		
Unique reference number	131721		
Type of school	Special; behavioural, emotional and social difficulties		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 2001		
Age range of students	11-16		
Gender of students	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 20	Girls: 0	Total: 20
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 19	Girls: 0	Total: 19
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 11	Girls: 0	Total: 11
Annual fees (day students)	£42,377		
Address of school	112 Orchard Road Sanderstead Surrey CR2 9LQ		
Telephone number	020 8657 1200		
Fax number	020 3252 2088		
Email address	admin@kingsdownsse.com		
Headteacher	Cheryl Butler		
Proprietor	Kevin Henry		
Reporting inspector	David Young		
Dates of inspection	17–18 June 2009		