

Aidenswood

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	861/6003
Unique Reference Number	125814
Social Care Number	040167
Inspection number	334283
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Sheila Ann Boyle AI
Social care inspector	Robert Hewston

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

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.

Information about the school

Aidenswood is a small, independent special school run by Northern Care. It is based in North Staffordshire and is registered to provide care, therapy and education for six boys between the ages of 13 and 17 years. Most of their educational needs relate to social, emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties. At the time of the inspection there were three students in school between the ages of 14 and 15. One has a statement of special educational needs. Three older students had just left the school having completed their final examinations. The school currently offers external accreditation in several subjects at GCSE level. All students who attend the school are referred by their local education authorities. The school was last inspected in July 2006. The most recent full inspection of the residential provision was in February 2009.

The school aims to provide a high quality education in a supportive and achieving environment for students not in a mainstream school and to foster their development by meeting their needs and giving them the confidence to lead purposeful and enjoyable lives.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of the school's provision is good overall with some outstanding features including the quality of care, the provision for students' emotional, social and personal development and their attendance. The school is particularly successful in re-engaging troubled students and developing their potential within a specialist therapeutic community. In recent times, most of the students have gone on to college to pursue academic or vocational courses having gained accreditation in core subjects at GCSE level. The cooperation and commitment of the multi-agency team working with students, including therapists and residential staff, contribute well to students' outstanding progress in emotional, social and personal development. Education is provided through the 24 hour curriculum in learning environments which are safe, nurturing, supportive yet stimulating and academically challenging for learners. The school has addressed all of the issues from the previous inspection; it meets its aims and all of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good and improving as the school increases the range of accredited subjects at GCSE level. Provision for students of all ages is broad and balanced and directly related to their needs and abilities. There is a clear focus on developing core skills of reading, writing and number and students generally make better than expected progress in these areas, often from a low starting point. A sufficient range of GCSE subjects are available for study including English, mathematics, double science, psychology, citizenship and preparation for working life. There are plans to introduce accreditation in art and information and communication technology (ICT) next year. The school also aims to re-introduce accreditation in physical education next year.

The students benefit from specialist lessons in science and improved resources for practical work. As a result, they have many opportunities for experimental and investigative work and achieve good standards in the three elements of this subject. ICT is used well to promote learning across the curriculum and students are competent in using word processing for coursework and the internet for research work. A programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) includes accredited courses in citizenship and in preparation for working life, as well as a programme of careers guidance which includes guidance from the local careers service. A real strength of the PSHE programme is the opportunity given to students through the individual community opportunities programme and experiences (ICOPE) programme. This is aimed at developing their social and independence skills within the local and wider community. Within each student's care plan is an ICOPE element, which is highly individualised and reflected also in their educational and, therapeutic plans. Within the residential setting students also engage in Direct Work activities which aim to prepare them for work and life in a multicultural society. For example, they learn about public institutions and services in Britain, as well as other cultures. Students have specialist one-to-one therapy sessions which support the work done by teachers and carers in tackling long standing, inappropriate behaviour and in developing strategies for dealing with it. Students demonstrate good social awareness, for example, several have donated a proportion of their money to charities.

The quality of teaching and assessment has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Students are taught in small groups and receive good individual support and, as a result, they generally make good progress in lessons and over time. Progress is best in science because both teachers are specialists in this subject. They use their knowledge of individual students well to plan activities which are interesting and engaging and, as a result, pupils speak knowledgeably about topics they have studied. For example, in a practical chemistry lesson students were able to describe the effects of oxygen and water on metals containing, sodium, lithium and potassium. Lessons are generally well planned and learning objectives are identified for each session, although objectives are not always based on the information from

assessments in previous lessons. Work is well matched to the students' needs through the level of support given. Relationships between staff and students are excellent; students appreciate being treated as equals and appreciate the respect they receive from everyone in the school. Teachers provide high quality pastoral support and care for each student. For example, they know that students may find it difficult to concentrate at times and so allow them to request time out of lessons on the understanding that this time will be made up later. This consistent approach to behaviour management is implemented across the provision and appreciated by students for its fairness.

Assessment procedures are good. On entry to the school students undergo baseline assessments in English and mathematics followed by formal assessments at the end of each unit of work. Teachers record students' progress from these assessments but do not record achievement against national norms. Assessment in lessons includes questioning and marking of work. Marking is generally helpful in helping students to improve future work. However, checks are not carried out to ensure advice given is acted upon.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is outstanding. Personal development is a strength because the staff successfully nurture the abilities of each student from their good knowledge and understanding of their needs and interests. Working relationships are warm and supportive and teachers apply an understanding, but firm and consistent approach to behaviour management. This helps to underpin the work done in the residential and therapeutic setting and contributes significantly to students' good behaviour and outstanding progress in personal and social development. One student reported that 'staff treat us like adults when we behave like adults'. Their attendance is outstanding and they rarely miss school.

Students' confidence, self-esteem and maturity are greatly enhanced by the activities offered through the ICOPE programme. Most of the students are acquiring the necessary interpersonal skills to start re-integrating with the local and wider community. For example, some are allowed time for shopping independently when the whole group has an outing in town. Others are able to travel independently to local venues such as weekly coaching sessions at a rugby club and fitness training at a local leisure centre. Some of the older students are able to travel independently further afield, for example, several have attended football matches and music events in Manchester.

Lessons in citizenship and coursework in preparation for working life are effective in preparing students for adult life. Students learn about public institutions and services in Britain and about life in a multicultural society. As part of these studies, students have visited a synagogue, a number of historical museums and samples of their multicultural art work were displayed recently in the local library. Staff provide plenty of opportunities for discussions about how students should behave and most have an

understanding of the consequences of their actions and can distinguish between right and wrong. This work is complemented by the one-to-one sessions they have with therapists and the Direct Work activities undertaken in the care setting. Increasingly, students are taking responsibility for their behaviour and acquiring skills to overcome past misdemeanours. Their growing moral and social awareness helps them contribute to school and community life. Students take it in turns to prepare a healthy meal for their peers and staff. They undertake domestic duties such as shopping for food and clothing and they clean the dormitories. Some students engage in wider community activities such as helping out at a local dogs' home or washing cars at a nearby garage. Their growing social awareness is demonstrated in their efforts to raise money for local and international charities. For example, several of the students have donated money they have earned to a charity which provides education for children in Kenya.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is good. All procedures for safeguarding students are in place, and meet the regulations. Risk assessments and fire evacuations are carried out regularly and fire equipment is tested regularly. Students are taught how to check for potentially hazardous situations in the science laboratory. There are excellent links with outside agencies to coordinate the care and welfare of students. Bullying is dealt with effectively and students report that they feel safe and well looked after in school. Suitable procedures for first aid are in place and a number of staff are trained in first aid procedures. Provision to encourage healthy living is good and enhanced by excellent programmes undertaken in the residential setting. These include the requirement for students to prepare a healthy balanced meal for themselves once per week. Individual health assessments are carried out regularly by a visiting nurse. Through initiatives introduced in the residence, students are increasingly attending fitness training sessions at the local leisure centre and participating in after-school sports events. The students also attend a six-week course on substance misuse for which they can obtain accreditation. The school has effective procedures in place for safeguarding students. The identified officers have undertaken relevant training and further training is planned to up date other staff. The school's child protection policy is being updated to reflect the good practice across the provision. Before they leave school each student has a Pathways Plan which is written in conjunction with the ICOPE programme and prepares them well for the transition from residential living to independent living and future education provision. The proprietors have a suitable plan in place to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has suitable recruitment procedures in place to ensure that all staff and the proprietor have undergone the necessary checks before commencing work at the school. A central staff register has been compiled in line with requirements.

School's premises and accommodation

The school's teaching accommodation is based on the ground floor of the residence. It is suitable for the number of students on roll. It consists of a medium-sized classroom, a small science room and a small ICT room. Teachers also have use of a large conference room on the first floor and an office, a large lounge, and the dining room and kitchen on the ground floor. There are sufficient washrooms for staff and students. There is a small lawned area at the rear of the building which is used, in addition to the local leisure centre, for physical education and recreational activities. There are plans to extend the outdoor play facilities in the near future. The premises and accommodation are well maintained and meet the regulations for independent schools.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides all of the required information to parents, carers and others through its prospectus, and the provision of frequent meetings. Each term, review meeting are held with external agencies and carers and, if appropriate, parents also attend these meetings. Annual reports are provided for parents and carers which summarise the students' progress and achievement in the subjects taught

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has clearly written complaints procedures covering the school and care setting which are available to parents and fully meet the regulations.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The residential provision was judged to be outstanding and National Minimum Standards are 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 information from short-term assessments more effectively to inform lesson planning, and to set targets for individual students
- evaluate students' progress over time against national norms
- ensure the guidance given through marking is followed up by students.

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 *(leave blank if not applicable)*

Evaluation of boarding provision	✓			
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School details

Name of school	Aidenswood
DCSF number	861/6003
Unique reference number	125814
Social Care Number	040167
Type of school	Special
Status	Independent
Date school opened	2004
Age range of students	13–17 years
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 3
Number of boarders	Boys: 6
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 1
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 6
Annual fees (day pupils)	£30,914
Annual fees boarders	£173,160
Telephone number	01782 777998
Fax number	01782 779091
Email address	aidenswood.education@northern-care.co.uk
Headteacher	Ms Lindy Scott
Proprietor	Northern Care
Reporting inspector	Sheila Ann Boyle
Dates of inspection	23–24 June 2009

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