

# Castle Lodge School

Independent Special School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	873/6039
Unique Reference Number	131260
URN for social care	SCO15252
Inspection number	334284
Inspection dates	18–19 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael Thirkell
Social care inspector	Mick Walklin

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

Castle Lodge School is registered as a small residential independent school for looked after children and opened in 2005. It is part of the Castle Care group. It specialises in the care of severely traumatised and dysfunctional young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and undertakes risk assessments relating to their particular circumstances. Students are placed by local authorities for varying lengths of time. The school has provision for 52-week residential accommodation and care. It is situated in a pleasant rural situation and is registered to take two children aged between 11 and 17; currently there is one boy aged 15 attending who has only very recently arrived. The school's aim is to support students to develop personally and to make academic progress through providing *'a safe and secure environment to enable the students to re-engage with education; develop co-operative and interpersonal skills; acquire study skills necessary to realise their own potential and to become receptive and willing to challenge themselves in their educational targets'*. The school was last inspected in November 2006.

## Evaluation of the school

Castle Lodge School provides a good quality of education which is suitably modified to meet the needs of individual students. A high quality of care is provided in practice by the dedicated teachers and residential staff, who work hard to ensure that the school's aims are met and the students make at least satisfactory progress. The quality of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory but with some strong features. The school has made a number of improvements since the last inspection in respect of the curriculum and resources, the use of assessment, the complaints policy and reporting to the placing local authority. It now meets all but one of the regulatory requirements for independent schools, as it does not ensure that all appropriate persons are aware that details of students' academic performance can be obtained from the school.

## Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. It has a number of strong as well as developing features designed to meet students' needs within the context of their very particular and challenging circumstances. It provides suitable opportunities for students to make progress, both within the school and through a range of other well-chosen activities linked to the broader aspects of their care. Central to the curriculum is the focus given to literacy and numeracy. The development of speaking and listening skills is supported effectively by ongoing dialogue between the student, the teacher, the key worker and the residential care staff.

A suitable curriculum policy is in place which provides students with an appropriate range of learning experiences. It is supported by a range of other guidance, including policies relating to 'Key Skills', 'Teaching and Learning' and 'Assessment, Planning, Recording and Reporting'. It makes appropriate provision for each key stage, and is supported by a wide range of documentation and schemes of work. The use of National Curriculum and QCA documents support continuity in a student's learning and, where possible, a return to mainstream education. Students are given the opportunity of working towards Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards at a range of levels, including the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness. The scheme is supported by a suitable range of resources. Students are given appropriate opportunities to take public examinations relative to their ability, including GCSE. The essence of curriculum planning is that it is relative to the individual student's needs and circumstances. An individual education plan has already been put in place for the student currently on roll which ensures an initial range of relevant learning experiences, to be broadened by the support of the adequate range of curriculum and extra-curricular resources.

The curriculum shows important improvements since the last inspection. However, while much planning is specific to the individual student, long- and short-term curriculum planning is not yet fully developed. For example, the range of vocational opportunities provided within the context of the school is insufficiently broad. Resources have been improved, particularly in relation to information and communication technology, and the school continues to assess how these resources can be further enhanced to meet the individual needs of the students. The curriculum provision has been extended to 25 hours since the previous inspection. It includes suitable personal, social and health education provision and the school has established arrangements with the local Connexions service to provide careers education relative to the students' needs.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Good teaching is supported by appropriately qualified and experienced staff who take time to listen to students as well as to provide guidance. Classroom management strategies are used effectively. Teaching and care staff work well together and regular meetings with residential care staff support students' learning, although the procedure for liaison lacks

sufficient guidance. The quality of relationships and the clear expectations communicated to students in lessons support the development of a positive atmosphere for teaching and learning. Careful questioning encourages and engages students effectively. Importantly, it gives them the opportunity to demonstrate existing knowledge and so provides guidance for the determination of subsequent activities. For example, during the inspection a student's interests in music and drawing quickly became apparent. Every opportunity was taken to explain the relevance of an activity or aspect of learning, and the value of the ASDAN award which the student was about to begin was helpfully explained. The good quality of relationships and communications has enabled the student to demonstrate satisfactory progress, even in the short time he had been at the school. Successful GCSE examination results in mathematics indicate that students are supported effectively in their re-engagement with education.

Assessment is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. A suitable range of baseline assessments is undertaken to determine the ability of students when they arrive at the school, including in relation to reading and numeracy. Despite the efforts of the school, information from previous placements can be hard to collect. Information gathered by the teacher from marking and assessments, but importantly also through ongoing dialogue with the student, is used well to inform planning. The individual education plan provided includes satisfactory evaluations and assessment of achievement although, due to the very recent arrival of the student, is still under development. The framework for assessment supports the evaluation of students' performance in relation to the school's aims.

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

The school makes satisfactory provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development overall, but features of its provision are of high quality. Raising the students' self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence are central to the aims of the school; they receive effective support from staff and therapists who work with them to understand aspects of their past in relation to their behaviour and emotional development. The nature of the environment supports students in reflecting on their past. In discussion with a student, the positive impact of the quiet rural location of the school was clearly evident. Sensitive dialogue in lessons and with care and residential staff helps students to develop confidence and encourages them to recognise and develop interests.

Students' moral development is emphasised through the examples set by staff and the clear guidance received by students at induction. The positive impact induction had on the attitude of a student was clear from his appreciation of how the school's expectations were explained to him. He recognised gratefully the care and time given to listening to him provided by all staff. Visits by local police officers in an informal setting support this aspect of students' development to good effect.

The good attendance and behaviour seen are strongly supported by the clear expectations set for students. They contribute to the community of the school through a range of chores they undertake, including cleaning their rooms and helping in general. They relate to the larger community through visits to the library and local sports centre and wherever possible through the Castle Forum, when they meet with students from other Castle Care schools to discuss matters relating to their education and welfare.

The school has established some provision for developing students' broad knowledge of public institutions but is aware that at present this is limited. Despite the strengths of some established activities previously held, such as a French day and an Indian day, opportunities for students' cultural development also lack sufficient planned development.

## Welfare, health and safety of the students

Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of students are good. Student's welfare is protected by a good range of well-prepared policies and procedures and by suitable staff training. Staff receive relevant safeguarding training and demonstrate a sound knowledge of the procedure to follow if they have concerns. Incidents involving unauthorised absences are well documented with the appropriate authorities being notified. Students are encouraged to stay healthy, safe and fit, and are provided with a good diet and regular exercise. Staff use effective strategies to help students to develop socially acceptable behaviour. They are protected by robust health and safety procedures. Regular fire and safety checks are undertaken with contracts in place for the servicing of fire equipment. Young people undertake regular fire drills and demonstrate good knowledge of evacuation procedures. Issues identified during a recent fire authority inspection have been resolved. A recent health and safety inspection conducted by the local authority found 'premises and practices satisfactory'. The school has a three-year action plan which sets out how the school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Staff selection procedures are rigorous, with appropriate checks being conducted before staff are allowed to work at the school. Details of all checks undertaken are recorded in a register as required.

## School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises and accommodation are suitable to support its aims and the particular emotional needs of students. Procedures for supervision are thorough. The converted farm building provides a homely environment, and the classroom is a suitability furnished environment for working and learning. The peaceful surroundings have a positive impact on students, particularly those with no previous experience of the countryside.

There is no practical provision, but the school has established links which support a range of opportunities in addition to those within the curriculum.

### Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides most the required information to parents, carers and other relevant authorities. It makes clear the range of additional information that it can provide but must also ensure that all parties are aware that they can request details of students' exam results. The prospectus is supported by a 'Statement of Purpose', which provides additional helpful information. The school provides monthly reports to the placing local authority, as well as appropriate annual returns in relation to expenditures.

### Procedures for handling complaints

The school has clear strategies for handling complaints, which are made available to parents, carers and other interested parties. They now include appropriate information in relation to the establishment of an appeal panel and the retention of written records of all complaints.

### Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The residential provision was judged to be good and National Minimum Standards were 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 ("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:

- ensure that parents are aware that they can request details of students' attainment (paragraph 6(2)(i)).

The school meets the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools.

## What the school could do to improve further

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

- extend the range of vocational opportunities provided within the curriculum
- improve the range of opportunities available to support students in developing an understanding of other cultures and beliefs
- provide formal guidance to support the established morning briefing of the teacher by the night care staff
- provide additional risk assessment for the surrounding areas of the 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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## The quality of boarding provision

Evaluation of boarding provision		√		
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## School details

Name of school	Castle Lodge School
DCSF number	873/6039
Unique reference number	131260
Type of school	Independent special school
Status	Independent
Date school opened	September 2005
Age range of students	11–17
Gender of students	Boys
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 1
Number of boarders	Boys: 1
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 1
Annual fees (boarders)	£378,201
Telephone number	01354 610439
Fax number	01354 610398
Headteacher	Marion Paige
Proprietor	Catherine Dalton of Castle Care
Reporting inspector	Michael Thirkell
Dates of inspection	18–19 June 2009