

Gable End

Independent Special School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	935/6085
Unique Reference Number	130855
URN for Social Care	SC062651
Inspection number	334300
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Julie Winyard HMI
Social care inspector	Dorrit Andrews

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

Gable End is a small independent residential special school in Suffolk owned by Care Focus Limited. The school opened in the autumn term of 2005. It originally aimed to make educational provision for up to three boys in the age range 11 to 16, but is now registered to take girls as well. It is in the process of extending its age range to admit 10-year-olds and currently has been approved to have one on emergency placement. Most of the pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities relate to social, emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties. Pupils who attend the school are in the care of the local authority. At the time of the inspection there were three pupils on roll, one in Year 5, one in Year 8 and one in Year 9. All pupils are funded by their local authority and currently none have a statement of special educational needs. The boarding provision was inspected at the same time as the school. The school was last inspected in 2006.

Evaluation of the school

Gable End School provides a good education for its pupils. The residential provision is of similar quality. The school has a very powerful 'strap line' in all its documentation: 'positivity, respect and self-esteem', and these three principles are evident in every aspect of the work of the school. Through constantly working at improving the lost and damaged self-esteem of the pupils, they are able to start rebuilding their academic skills. Staff in the school and the residential setting work seamlessly together. At its last inspection, the school failed a number of regulations. Since then there have been many improvements and the school now fulfils all the required regulations. Pupil questionnaires received were very positive about the quality of education they receive.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good and is underpinned by an effective curriculum policy. It is broad and balanced. Schemes of work are good.

They are mainly based on national guidance or the ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) and GCSE syllabi as appropriate. In addition, the school has worked well with an educational consultant to develop a more creative, cross-curricular approach to planning. This enables teachers to personalise the curriculum so that it meets the very individual needs and interests of their pupils. Long- and medium-term plans provide teachers with a suitable structure from which to plan lessons. There are good opportunities for pupils to take part in physical activities, including football, swimming, roller-skating and athletics. Visits and visitors suitably enrich the curriculum. For example, there has been a recent visit to Ipswich Museum to look at Second World War exhibits, and a World Music Day where pupils were given the opportunity to play a range of instruments brought in by the group and to compose a collaborative piece of music. Careers guidance is provided for pupils of secondary school age and there are good links with the Connexions service.

Teaching and assessment are good and ensure that pupils make good progress in their learning. Teaching is good in all lessons and some outstanding teaching was seen during the inspection. Staff successfully develop pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem and they promote good attitudes to learning. However, pupils do not get sufficient opportunities to contribute their ideas to lessons thus enabling them to become more independent as learners. Care assistants become learning support assistants during the school day and provide good emotional support for pupils in all lessons. They also act as role models, acting out good learning behaviour to enable pupils, often disaffected because of their previous experiences, to learn how to relate to the teachers, how to listen well and how to apply themselves to tasks set. This approach is very effective in helping pupils to understand how to behave as learners. However, the learning support assistants do not currently have training in how to support pupils learning and the school is keen to address this.

The good relationships evident enable learning to be carried out in a very positive climate. Wall displays are current and the pupils are keen to share their good work with others. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they manage pupils' behaviour well. Although teachers take account of pupils' differing aptitudes, needs or prior attainment when setting work, there is not always sufficient challenge for the most able pupils. Activities are not always pitched at the right level so that individuals sometimes find work too easy. Despite this, regular and effective one-to-one support ensures pupils' access to the curriculum and deals quickly with any misconceptions or problems that arise.

A range of good assessment methods is used to determine pupils' attainment. The school tracks pupils' progress in their behaviour and their learning. Assessment information is used to plan lessons. However, there is not a consistent approach to written marking and feedback and pupils are not always clear what they need to do next to improve their work.

Nor are they given specific time in lessons to do this although they are quick to respond to teacher's comments indicating that they do read what is written. Resources are good overall and the school is currently building up resources for the themed projects that have been planned.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The spiritual development of pupils is evident in how much they now enjoy being praised for good work and achievement and how much they enjoy the company of the adults in the school. They talk excitedly about activities such as swimming and go-karting. Knowledge and understanding of the wider multicultural aspects of life in the United Kingdom are taught through the themed topics, and the boarding staff reflect this cultural diversity so pupils have some experience of different ethnic groups. There are suitable plans to expand this aspect within the curricular themes.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and say that they really appreciate the one-to-one attention they receive. Their attendance is good and it is monitored very effectively by the school. Pupils' moral and social development is outstanding because of the close association with the residential setting and excellent relationships pupils have with residential and teaching staff. Pupils show tolerance and understanding of difference because of the outstanding support they receive for their emotional, moral and social development. All staff consistently apply the behaviour policy and pupils are very clear about the high expectations all adults have for them. They respond well and because of this, behaviour is good at all times. For example, at mealtimes behaviour is outstanding because pupils show good manners and ask each other very politely to pass food that is not close to them. They display excellent table manners and conversation is lively and relates to general life in the residential setting, in school and activities they will be involved with after school.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The overall provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is good. All child protection procedures are fully in place, are reviewed annually and staff are given regular training and updates by an appropriately trained manager. Safe recruitment procedures are followed at all times and checks are recorded as required.

Good arrangements are adopted to promote pupils' welfare and health. Clear, written behaviour and anti-bullying policies are implemented effectively. Pupils say that behaviour is mainly good and they are right. They report that they are free from harassment, intimidation and bullying and if this occurs, staff are very quick to resolve matters using the agreed procedures in the behaviour policy. On a day-to-day basis pupils are cared for well. The favourable staff-to-pupil ratio means that pupils are well supervised at all times. The school promotes a healthy lifestyle for its pupils and mealtimes in the residence encourage all pupils to make healthy choices.

Some pupils are a little reluctant to do this, however they love the opportunity they are given to plan and cook meals themselves. This contributes to their commitment to making healthy choices and their future economic well-being because they have to budget, shop and then prepare the food for their peers and the staff.

Attendance registers are kept in good order. The admission register fully complies with regulatory requirements. There is an appropriate Disability Discrimination Action Plan and the school is currently reviewing access to all teaching areas particularly the path linking the teaching and residential parts of the school.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has appropriate procedures for safeguarding pupils. The single central record of staff suitability is fully in place and vetting procedures are carried out as required for all staff and proprietors.

School's premises and accommodation

These are of good quality and enable the pupils to learn effectively, safely and securely. Classrooms are bright and in good decorative order. There is good provision for practical activities for example in science and art.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school prospectus sets out clearly the aims and ethos of the school. There is good information about all aspects of the school including a summary of the curriculum offered. The school is in the process of updating this to include provision for Key Stage 2 pupils. Annual reports provide a full and useful account of pupils' attainments, achievements and progress and the next steps they need to take to improve their learning.

Procedures for handling complaints

This complies fully with regulations. The procedure is clearly set out and there is also a version that is suitable for pupils to read and understand. There have been no complaints in the last year from parents, local authorities or staff.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The residential provision is judged to be good 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.

The school meets the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools and associated regulations.

What the school could do to improve further

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

- give more opportunities for pupils to contribute their ideas to lessons, thus enabling them to become more independent as learners
- ensure that all lessons are appropriately differentiated so that the most able pupils are given sufficient challenge and progress is accelerated
- develop a consistent approach to marking and feedback so that pupils understand what they have done well and how they can make further improvements to their work
- implement a training programme for learning support assistants so that they are better able to support pupils' academic development.

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	Gable End		
DCSF number	935/6085		
Unique reference number	130855		
Type of school	Special – behavioural, emotional and social difficulties		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	2005		
Age range of pupils	11–16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 2	Girls: 1	Total: 3
Number of boarders	Boys: 2	Girls: 1	Total: 3
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 2	Girls: 1	Total: 3
Annual fees (boarders)	£217,828		
Telephone number	01449 744928		
Fax number	01449 744913		
Email address	claireguernari@carefocus.co.uk ; administrationoffice@carefocus.co.uk		
Headteacher	Miss Claire Guernari		
Proprietor	Care Focus Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Julie Winyard HMI		
Dates of inspection	13–14 May 2009		