

MacIntyre School

Independent Special School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	825/6011
Unique Reference Number	110564
URN for social care	SC043994
Inspection number	334884
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Anne Duffy HMI
Social care inspector	Paula Eaton

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005). The inspection of boarding was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 08456 404040

www.ofsted.gov.uk



Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order 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.

This was a light touch educational inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding students and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

MacIntyre School offers 52 week residential provision and 40 weeks educational provision for children and young people between 10 and 19 years of age. It is part of the Lifelong Learning Division of MacIntyre, a registered charity. The school, located in a rural setting in the Vale of Aylesbury, was established in an old manor house and moved into a new, award-winning, building in the grounds in April 2007.

Students have a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including autistic spectrum disorder and often have additional medical needs. All the students have severe communication difficulties and varying degrees of challenging behaviour. All have statements of special educational needs and are placed at the school by their local authority. Currently there are 37 residential and two day students, plus four students who participate in the 'No limits' programme run by the MacIntyre group. This provision was not inspected as part of the school, although it does make use of the school's facilities.

The school has had a change of leadership since the last inspection. This has brought with it a change of focus so that it now aims to provide an environment where 'we encourage each other to achieve all we can in a safe and healthy environment. We promote independence and effective communication in everything that we do.'

The last full inspection of the school was carried out in 2006.

Evaluation of the school

MacIntyre School provides a good quality of education and makes good provision for the personal development and for the welfare of its students. In its drive to achieve it aims it has been successful in creating good curricular provision which impacts well

upon the communication and independence of the students. Students make good progress overall as a result of predominantly good teaching which provides a wide range of learning opportunities. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good and the excellent relationships between staff and students support good behaviour. Although not necessarily able to express their views themselves, students demonstrate that they enjoy the experiences provided by both school and the residential houses. Procedures for ensuring the safeguarding of students are rigorous.

The previous inspection of the school recommended that it: make assessment more consistent across the school and devise ways to show small steps of progress; and improve continuity of support staffing in classes. The relatively new leadership team has addressed both these points with clarity of vision. As a result, assessment and tracking of small-step progress is now embedded within the school's processes. A change in the staffing structure has created a team of teaching assistants who play an important role in supporting students' learning.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. It rightly focuses upon students' needs to maximise communication and personal or life skills. As one parent put it, 'this curriculum is for our child'. Students in the lower school department follow a modified curriculum which is adapted to meet individual need. Those in the upper school department follow a 'Moving On' curriculum, together with a personalised MacIntyre curriculum, which supports an individualised pathway through to leaving school. Where appropriate, students are supported in attending college or placements outside school and the guidance provided by the 'My Way' programme ensures that transition to adult provision is well supported. ICT is used well to support learning in as many settings as possible as well as providing an individualised programme for each student. Sensory-based teaching extends curricular provision through a well-tailored individual sensory session or support for the tutor group teacher in developing a sensory approach in the classroom. Subjects are appropriately delivered through a two year rolling programme of cross-curricular topics which serve as a vehicle for students to work towards, and reach, their individual targets. Time after school includes a range of activities and the school is rightly looking at ways to ensure that these are provided more consistently during week-ends and out of term-time. Currently, opportunities vary and skills learnt in school are not always built upon in a planned way. Nevertheless students appreciate the opportunities they are given to practise new skills out of school: 'I can whistle and juggle' reported one young man.

Teaching and assessment are good overall. Teachers are clear about what is expected in terms of planning and recording of progress and ensure that this is shared well with teaching assistants. As a result there is a common approach to student involvement and learning. Lessons are generally delivered well so that students can access tasks at the individual level required. For example, students learning about food technology each contribute a part of the processes required to cook fish or make a cake. Good use is made of observations so that each step

forward is noticed, recorded and built upon. Targets are regularly reviewed and modified if necessary. Therapists and the behaviour support team form an integral part of a person-centred approach so that learning, communication and personal development go hand in hand. Relationships are excellent. All staff demonstrate a detailed understanding of the needs of each student and contribute greatly to the calm and purposeful atmosphere which pervades the school.

Although levels of attainment are very low in comparison with national expectations, students make good progress overall. This is demonstrated in the improved moderation of students' own behaviour, communication and learning of new skills which for some include reading and early numeracy. The increased focus upon individual targets in every lesson supports this good progress with signs that it is beginning to have even greater impact. The school has introduced thorough assessment processes and sets annual, termly and shorter term targets for improvement which are regularly reviewed. This review involves parents, the school's senior leaders and the students' own teachers as well as other professionals and, as far as possible, the students themselves. Placing local authorities comment favourably on the thoroughness of this approach. However, there is no system to involve staff in moderating targets or to consistently annotate evidence so that their understanding of what constitutes satisfactory, good, or outstanding progress is variable.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is good. Attendance and behaviour are good and, with few exceptions, parents report that their children enjoy school. The demeanour of the students certainly conveys this enjoyment. As one student responded 'I am happy and smiling'. With good support and guidance, students move safely around the different areas of the school and demonstrate that they feel secure in a range of situations, from samba dancing in the hall to smashing plates in a 'Greek' assembly.

Circle time and effective assemblies contribute well to school unity and there is a strong sense of community. Students participate in organising activities, including those connected with Red Nose Day and raising money to support charities such as world autism awareness day. The student council is very proud of its role and has summoned the headteacher to the next meeting to explain why, despite their requests, school staff can't remember to replace the keys when they have been using a mini-bus!

There is a good range of visitors such as a visiting theatre group, and visits to local establishments such as the post office. Through these, students are helped to understand the types and roles of public services and institutions in England. Students are successfully encouraged to celebrate difference and diversity within the school population and in the wider community. There is excellent provision to raise awareness of different cultures and traditions, as well as respecting their own. Students experience many different foods, traditions and dances from countries such as India and Portugal. The recent 'MacFest' music festival was a great success.

In addition to an annual 'world of work' week, a full programme of work-related activities is in place. This enables students to experience a variety of work environments, from collecting and delivering the post to forming part of the ground-force team which is 'contracted' to maintain the school grounds.

Safeguarding students' welfare, health and safety

The school recognises that its students are vulnerable, and the inspection team agrees that it makes good provision for their welfare, health and safety. Thorough policies and procedures are in place to safeguard students. The head of care is the designated child protection officer. She has completed certificated training and all staff receive regular training from the local authority in order to keep up to date with child protection matters. There have been occasions when incidents which occurred should have been reported to senior staff and parents and this was not done swiftly enough, so that the agreed policies and procedures were not fully adhered to. The organisation has taken appropriate action to address this and is aware of the need for continued vigilance.

Medicines are kept safely and their use is logged correctly. Students' health is promoted well through healthy eating and inspectors greatly enjoyed the healthy lunch provided by the students from their salad bar. Opportunities for physical activity, which include trampolining, swimming and go-karting are available in and out of school. The level of supervision is good and students demonstrate that they feel safe. As part of its behaviour management approach the school uses the Team Teach programme very effectively. The school has a thorough and regularly reviewed access plan in line with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002, an area of non-compliance at the last inspection.

Parents were almost completely united in their high praise for the school, which works hard to involve them. They appreciate the time that staff take to talk to them if they have a problem or a worry as well as the regular communication which takes place.

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 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:

- involve staff more fully in the whole-school processes for target setting, assessment and tracking of progress in order to ensure consistency
- align more closely the approaches used by school and boarding to support students in reaching their targets.

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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The quality of boarding provision

Evaluation of boarding provision		✓		
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School details

Name of school	MacIntyre School		
DCSF number	825/6011		
Unique reference number	110564		
Type of school	Residential special		
Status	Independent special		
Date school opened	1974		
Age range of students	10–19		
Gender of students	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 33	Girls: 6	Total: 39
Number of boarders	Boys: 31	Girls: 6	Total: 37
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 33	Girls: 6	Total: 39
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 30	Girls: 6	Total: 36
Annual fees (day students)	£35,000		
Annual fees (boarders)	£175,000		
Address of school	Leighton Road Wingrave Buckinghamshire HP22 4PA		
Telephone number	01296 681274		
Fax number	01296 681091		
Email address	dave.miller@macintyrecharity.org		
Headteacher	Mr Dave Miller		
Proprietor	MacIntyre Care		
Reporting inspector	Anne Duffy HMI		
Dates of inspection	9–10 June 2009		