

Nugent House School

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number	342/6004
Unique reference number	104839
URN for registered social care	SC371267
Inspection number	342467
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Reporting inspector	Anne Duffy HMI
Social care inspector	Sarah Oldham

Age group: 7-19

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A¹ of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², 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 care provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the national minimum standards for children's homes. This inspection took place at the same time but the full report is published separately on Ofsted's website and should be read in conjunction with this report which covers the educational registration of the school.

Information about the school

Nugent House School is situated in a village near Wigan. It is a Roman Catholic residential special school and children's home that opened in February 1983. As part of the Nugent Care organisation it provides residential and day provision for boys, aged between seven and 19 years, who have severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. All have a statement of special educational needs and the majority have a history of previously interrupted schooling. The boys come mainly from the Midlands and the north of England, although some are from further afield, and all have been placed by their respective local authority. At the time of the inspection, there were 57 pupils on roll, all of whom had English as their principal language.

The school aims 'to create a secure, orderly and caring community in which pupils are able to achieve both academically and personally, whilst developing respect and concern for others'. The school was last inspected in March 2007 when it met all the independent school regulations. The last inspection of the children's home was in November 2008 when it met all but five of the national minimum standards for children's homes.

Evaluation of the school

The school provides pupils with a good education which is supported by good levels of care. The overall quality of boarding is good. The school achieves its aims well so that this is indeed 'a secure and orderly community'. Underpinned by increasingly well-tailored therapies, it meets the social, emotional needs of pupils well so that their motivation and behaviour improve significantly during their time at the school. Curricular provision is good, as are teaching and assessment overall. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, in the context of their significant

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

behavioural and social needs is good. The caring ethos of the establishment is reflected in the vigilance and good relationships demonstrated by the staff across both school and boarding. Arrangements for safeguarding are good.

The quality of education was judged to be satisfactory in the last inspection. The quiet determination of the principal, who was newly in post at the last inspection, has ensured that the school has continued to move forward and in this she has been helped by some key appointments at senior level. The school has addressed the suggested points for development effectively. The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. Its particular strengths lie in the focus upon pupils' social, emotional and therapeutic needs. Younger pupils follow a suitable primary curriculum delivered by their class teacher and supplemented by subject specialists. The nurture provision offers pupils with more complex learning or behavioural difficulties an appropriately matched curriculum with specialist subject input as appropriate. Since the last inspection the range of academic pathways and accreditation has been extended and the secondary department follows a well planned curriculum which is enhanced by opportunities to learn off-site. All areas benefit from focused support from teaching assistants. The school works hard to provide both curricular and extra-curricular opportunities which match individual pupils' interests and are well linked to rewards for good behaviour. This approach provides an incentive to work towards a range of activities which include golf, ten pin bowling, art and information and communication technology clubs. As a result, pupils gradually develop a work ethic which many have not had before.

Teaching and assessment are good overall. A concerted move to improve the consistency of good teaching has had evident impact. Strengths in teaching include the consistent management of behaviour and excellent relationships that encourage many pupils to persevere when before they may have given up or become disruptive. The most skilful teaching overcomes, in a variety of ways, pupils' reluctance to read or write. This was particularly evident in individual literacy sessions and in a primary class where a cooking activity was interwoven well with a writing task. Learning objectives are shared consistently with pupils and they all have an individual learning target for every lesson. Pupils respond well to plenary sessions where they are involved in evaluating their own learning and progress. Occasionally, teachers have a tendency to overly dominate and so miss opportunities for pupils to be as fully engaged as they might, but pupils clearly enjoy the feedback that this part of the lesson provides.

The relatively recent appointments of special education needs coordinator, head of therapy and curriculum manager has enabled the school to take action swiftly to improve the quality and range of education and therapy assessments and interventions. Good use is made of individual education plans to set long-term

targets. However, the number of assessments now carried out by the school has resulted in a wealth of information which is not yet fully coordinated. As a result, it is not consistently informing teaching and personalised planning as effectively as it might.

Taking into account the history and ability of the pupils when they join the school, progress overall by the end of Key Stage 4 is good and for some individuals it is outstanding. As one parent wrote, 'My son has made outstanding progress during his time at Nugent House, both academically and in his personal development'. Primary pupils and those in the nurture classes make good progress as a result of well focused teaching and support. For older pupils, staff work hard to build success with Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN), Entry Level Certificate, National Vocational Qualifications and GCSE courses so that all pupils leave school having gained some accreditation. Post-16 pupils benefit from being able to improve their social skills and take forward particular areas of interest. The centre makes good links with support agencies and local colleges. Pupils receive the guidance and experiences they need to prepare them for moving to the next stage in their education or working life and the large majority of last year's school leavers moved on to further education.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils, which often starts from a very low base, is good. Since the last inspection links between education and care have been formalised and strengthened so that pupils' emotional and social needs are met more consistently. Many pupils enjoy the opportunity to develop skills that they did not know they had, for example, in sport, art and music. Others respond well to the lessons learnt through ASDAN and life skills projects, and in the effective therapeutic sessions where they are encouraged to develop strategies for coping with their anger and consider and acknowledge differing points of view. They develop an awareness of other people's lives and cultures through links such as those that have been established with a school in Ghana. Younger pupils were looking forward with great enthusiasm to making and selling pizza for Children in Need later in the week. Through events such as this, membership of the school council and participation in performance and sports events, pupils are given the opportunity to contribute positively to the school community and develop skills which will help their future economic and emotional well-being.

Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. Although some find tolerance hard, the pastoral approach of the school creates a positive and encouraging atmosphere to which pupils gradually respond. As a result, although always behaving well remains difficult for many, verbal or physical outbursts cause minimum disruption to the calm atmosphere which pervades the school. For some pupils attendance is still not good enough, but it is nevertheless significantly improved from previous placements and the school makes every effort to bring pupils into school if the usual arrangements have broken down.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. This is acknowledged by a comment from one parent who wrote, 'Staff are genuinely concerned for the well-being of my child'. Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place to safeguard pupils' safety and welfare, including the required training on children protection. The school has robust procedures for tackling incidents, including those involving bullying. This was seen in practice during anti-bullying week which took place during the week of the inspection. Staff are aware of how to deal with incidents appropriately and records show an encouraging decrease in the use of restraint over the past two years.

Pupils appear at ease and open in their relationships with each other and with staff. The quality of supervision is extremely good and pupils generally feel safe. The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, such as autistic spectrum disorder, are met well, particularly in the school's nurture centre. There are ample opportunities both on and off the site for pupils to take part in outdoor exercise and they make good use of local facilities. Relaxed and shared meal times steer pupils well towards a healthy and balanced diet, although a few find it hard to lose their preference for particular foods. Pupils are sensitively guided towards an awareness of other aspects of healthy living, including acceptable attitudes to sex, drinking and drugs. Fire procedures and risk assessments for educational visits are employed well. First aid policies and procedures meet the regulations.

The school has developed an accessibility plan which complies with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school keeps the required single central register and checks all staff to ensure their suitability to work with children. Therapists, psychiatry and psychology professionals are also appropriately included in the register.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises provide an excellent environment for safe and effective learning. Well maintained surroundings contribute well to the pupils' experience. The site, which includes extensive and attractive grounds, is well maintained and well cared for. Classrooms are of a good size; specialist teaching areas such as those for science, food technology and sport have been recently refurbished and are well used. Boarding houses are modern and attractive.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The organisation provides clear information on its website and there is an informative prospectus. The reporting system, which includes annual reviews and

reviews for children who are looked after, help parents, carers and local authorities to be informed about pupils' progress.

Procedures for handling complaints

Procedures for dealing with complaints are available and are compliant with the regulations.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The care provision was judged to be good and national minimum standards were met. A full report on the care provision is available on Ofsted's website and should be viewed in conjunction with this report.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

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

- ensure that the increasingly detailed assessment information available for each pupil is collated and used consistently to raise the quality of teaching and learning still further.

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	Nugent House School		
DCSF number	342/6004		
Unique reference number	104839		
Type of school	Special Residential School		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	February 1983		
Age range of pupils	7-19 years		
Gender of pupils	Male		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 57	Girls: 0	Total: 57
Number of boarders	Boys: 23	Girls: 0	Total: 23
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 57	Girls: 0	Total: 57
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 19	Girls: 0	Total: 19
Annual fees (day pupils)	£60,000		
Annual fees (boarders)	£90,000		
Telephone number	01744 892551		
Fax number	01744 895697		
Email address	jpowell@nugentcare.org		
Principal	Ms Wendy Sparling		
Proprietor	Nugent Care		
Reporting inspector	Anne Duffy HMI		
Dates of inspection	17-18 November 2009		