

# Ashmeads School

Independent special school inspection report

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DCSF registration number	928/6069
Unique Reference Number (URN)	133515
Inspection number	344419
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Mike Kell

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A<sup>1</sup> of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005<sup>2</sup>, 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.

## Information about the school

Ashmeads School is situated near Kettering in Northamptonshire. There have been significant changes since the last inspection in May 2007. The current proprietor owns a number of independent special schools and took over Ashmeads in September 2007. The present headteacher began in November 2008. All of the students are in public care. Five of them live in children's homes in the local area that are managed by the school's proprietor while the remainder are with foster parents or in other children's homes. Local authorities fund all students on roll; seven currently support students. All students have social, behavioural and emotional difficulties and in almost all cases this is recognised in a statement of special educational needs. The school summarises its aims as 'to provide a positive and nurturing environment to support the growth and achievement of every child'.

## Evaluation of the school

The school provides a satisfactory education for its students. All of them have experienced significant disruption in their personal lives and each has a very chequered educational history. Ashmeads does a satisfactory job in helping them to re-engage with school by rekindling their interest and raising their ambition. It goes most of the way to meeting its aims. It is not totally successful as it does not yet manage students' behaviour consistently and this reduces the rate at which they learn and make progress, both academically and socially. The school has policies and procedures to safeguard students but it fails to meet this regulation fully. The designated senior member of staff is not trained to the correct level, although such training is booked. The majority of other regulations are met.

## Quality of education

The quality of education is satisfactory. The curriculum is satisfactory overall although younger students receive a good range of learning activities. A focus on promoting key literacy and numeracy skills and a comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education are supplemented by a good variety of other subjects. Subjects such as art, science, music and cookery enhance students'

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

learning experiences. The core elements of the curriculum remain in place as students move through the school and schemes of work ensure that planned topics are appropriate to students' ages. Aspects such as careers education become more important and students work towards accredited qualifications, although none has yet taken any. They develop some good self-help skills through subjects such as cookery but overall they are prepared satisfactorily for leaving school. The effectiveness of this curriculum is reduced by the absence of a detailed work-related learning programme for all students. There are links with Connexions but not all students have a work experience placement and none is enrolled on a vocational course at a local college. Community facilities are used satisfactorily to encourage students to behave correctly in social situations and to enrich their learning, such as the very recent visit to a World War II exhibition at a local museum and the regular outdoor education programme. The school is at the very early stage of motivating students to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

Teachers have the necessary knowledge of the subjects that they teach and lessons are informed by long and medium term subject plans. Consequently, lessons are intended to develop students' learning in a coherent and progressive way. The school is only partially successful in doing this. Teaching and assessment procedures are satisfactory. Teachers plan what they hope to achieve in lessons. In some cases this involves a good challenge as teachers anticipate that students will follow routines and do what is expected of them, such as sitting correctly and wearing the correct clothes in subjects such as cookery. Lessons succeed when such high expectation is supported by individualised planning that recognises each student's starting point and capabilities. When planning does not go beyond the level of just identifying general aims for students' learning, teaching is much less effective. As learning is not personalised, students lose interest and their behaviour deteriorates. Staff do not employ a consistent approach to managing these situations and so they are not always defused quickly, especially in the class of younger students. In these cases the situation escalates and students' own learning and that of others suffers.

A number of assessments are carried out when students enter the school, ranging from ascertaining particular learning styles to determining National Curriculum levels. There are satisfactory arrangements and procedures in place, rooted in individual learning plans, for monitoring students' progress from these starting points. These plans also provide a satisfactory vehicle for tracking the provision that is in place to meet the requirements of students' statements of special educational needs and the impact that it has. Students make satisfactory progress in their learning.

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

The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Students are unanimous in declaring that they enjoy school and the attendance of most supports this claim. Some older students demonstrate this enjoyment and recognise what the school does for them by learning how to behave responsibly and by setting themselves targets for in school and beyond. These fewer

more mature students develop social awareness and a growing appreciation of others' feelings and views. Despite this, even within the context of a special school some students remain inconsiderate to the needs of others. They make stuttering progress in developing self-esteem through improved social and communication skills. Behaviour, while satisfactory overall, is erratic, relationships are fragile and some students struggle to determine right from wrong. The curriculum provides good opportunities for students to consider characteristics of British life. These range from aspects such as government, democracy and the media to cultural features studied in history and English. The general studies and religious education programmes also give some insight into the traditions of other cultures and religions. Students have limited opportunities to contribute to the local community or to the life of the school given its size, nature and location although they do participate in national charity days, such as Comic Relief.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Parents and carers agree unanimously that the staff take good care of their children and the students confirm that they feel safe in school. Local authorities did not register any concerns about the students that they have at the school. The school takes satisfactory care of its students overall; they are supervised and looked after well on a day-to-day basis. The school has healthy school status and students' health is also encouraged via the outdoor education programme. Fire and electrical equipment is checked regularly and risk assessments are routine. Critical incidents are logged, although less serious disturbances are not, even when they disturb learning. Sanctions are recorded, although exclusions are not used. Appropriate policies safeguard children but the member of staff with designated responsibility for child protection is not trained to the required standard. The school has a first aid policy and procedures but it cannot implement these fully as there is only one trained first aider. Therefore, the school cannot guarantee that an appropriately trained member of staff is always available for all student activities. Students' attendance at school is recorded correctly and their entry into the school is logged in the admissions register, but not alphabetically and there is insufficient information about previous schools attended.

The school meets fully the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended. It has an effective three-year accessibility plan in place.<sup>3</sup>

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

There are robust procedures in place for ensuring that staff are suitable for working with children. A systematically applied procedure ensures that all adults' personal details are rigorously checked, and all are subject to a check at an enhanced level with the Criminal Records Bureau. The school also carries out the additional scrutiny

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<sup>3</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/ukpga\\_19950050\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/ukpga_19950050_en_1)

that is required for staff who have lived outside the United Kingdom, as well as confirming their right to work here.

## School's premises and accommodation

The school building is maintained to a good standard. It is in good condition both internally and externally. The rooms are warm and light and they provide a welcoming environment, with many bright displays around the school. There are sufficient rooms for some to be used as specialist teaching areas, for subjects such as art, science and cookery. The rooms provide ample teaching space and there is an appropriate range of equipment and resources of a suitable nature and quality to meet students' needs. The school is set in large pleasant grounds that allow students to let off steam at break times.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school's prospectus or other documentation that is sent to prospective parents, carers and local authorities contain the majority of information that it is required to supply. However, none of it makes reference to ways of making contact with the proprietor. The school provides information to local authorities in order for them to carry out their statutory duties, but not all local authorities questioned have confidence in the accuracy of some of the reports produced. On the other hand, parents and carers appreciate the school's communication systems and the information that they receive. While a local authority can request details of how the school spends its fees, they do not receive this information routinely.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a thorough policy for managing complaints and an effective procedure for dealing with any that students or their families might make.

## 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 those listed below.<sup>4</sup>

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- establish teachers' use of effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly (paragraph 1(3)(h)).

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<sup>4</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm)

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- implement fully its procedures to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by ensuring that the member of staff with designated responsibility for child protection and welfare is trained to a standard set by the Local Safeguarding Children Board (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- make sure that there are sufficient trained first aiders for one to be available at all times (paragraph 3(6))
- maintain an admission register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006<sup>5</sup> (paragraph 3(9)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- provide the address and telephone number of the proprietor's registered or principal office (paragraph 6(2)(b))
- provide local authorities with an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred for each pupil registered at the school that they wholly or partly fund (paragraph 6(8)).

## 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 opportunities for work-related learning by making links with local colleges and increasing the number of work experience placements
- ensure that all incidents of unacceptable behaviour are logged, and analyse both those and more serious incident reports in order to evaluate the effectiveness of whole school behaviour management strategies
- make explicit the school's expectations of students' behaviour with regard to removing outdoor coats and sitting on chairs correctly in order to help establish a positive learning climate in all classrooms.

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<sup>5</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2006/20061751.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2006/20061751.htm)

# 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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## School details

Name of school	Ashmeads School		
DCSF number	928/6069		
Unique reference number (URN)	133515		
Type of school	Special (social, behavioural and emotional difficulties)		
Status	Independent special		
Date school opened	2001		
Age range of pupils	11–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 6	Girls: 3	Total: 9
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 6	Girls: 1	Total: 7
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 6	Girls: 3	Total: 9
Annual fees (day pupils)	£33,540		
Address of school	Buccleuch Farm Haigham Hill Burton Latimer Kettering NN15 5PH		
Telephone number	01536 725998		
Fax number	01536 420847		
Email address	ashmeadsschool@keyschildcare.co.uk		
Headteacher	Miss Joyce Kuwaza		
Proprietor	Keys Childcare Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Mike Kell		
Dates of inspection	9–10 February 2010		