

Barton School

Independent school inspection report

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Unique Reference Number (URN)	134315
URN for registered social care	SC 066565
Inspection number	344446
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Reporting inspector	Amraz Ali HMI
Social care inspector	Russell Shakford

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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

Barton School is children's home which offers education. It is one of a small number of similar schools owned and run by its parent company, Options Group. The school opened in 2006 to provide residential and day education for pupils aged eight to nineteen years with autism and complex learning difficulties, the majority exhibit challenging behaviours. There are currently eighteen pupils on the roll; eleven with fifty-two-week placements, two with thirty-eight-week placements and five day pupils. The majority are boys but there are three girls on roll and almost all are of White British origin. All pupils have statements of special educational needs and are funded by local authorities from across England. The school was previously inspected in June 2007 and the care provision was inspected in June 2009.

The school's vision statement is to provide a safe environment where pupils have the opportunity to develop skills, attitudes and acceptable behaviours through a range of flexible and creative educational and social experiences. It aims to support the development of independence and citizenship to progress to adulthood appropriate to the needs of each pupil.

Evaluation of the school

Barton School meets its aims and provides its pupils with a satisfactory education. Since the previous inspection the school has continued to grow and some aspects of its provision are further developed than others. The satisfactory curriculum meets the pupils' needs by providing individualised learning opportunities and has strengths in the opportunities that promote pupils' personal development. However, some aspects of teaching and the use of assessment information are underdeveloped in shaping the learning experiences of all pupils. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Arrangements to safeguard pupils at the

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

school are robust. The pupils and parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire indicated that they were happy with the school. The school meets almost all of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The quality of education is satisfactory overall and pupils make satisfactory progress. The satisfactory curriculum meets the needs of pupils by focusing on their individual needs and provides structured individual learning opportunities. These are most successful when they are short, focused activities and are generally effective at engaging and interesting pupils. Particular strengths are in establishing routines for pupils and in developing their personal and social skills. The development of communication skills is seen as a priority. For example, many pupils are provided with picture exchange symbols to present them with choices and to establish routines. The curriculum is broad, balanced, based on the National Curriculum and adapted to meet the pupils' needs. Visits are a strong feature of the provision and have included trips to local places of interest and further afield to museums, theatres and art galleries. The post-16 curriculum focuses well on work skills, life skills and vocational studies. Appropriate consideration is given to preparing pupils for the time when they leave school.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory overall and some good teaching and learning was seen during the inspection. Strengths in all of the observed lessons included good relationships between staff and pupils. All staff demonstrated high levels of empathy and patience with pupils; providing them with much praise and encouragement. All pupils have a range of individual plans in place to support their learning and personal and social development including individual education plans and detailed professional advice. These take account of information from pupils' statements of special educational needs and are used to tailor activities within lessons for each pupil. The most successful plans show clearly that teachers know their pupils well and provide well-thought-out learning activities that allow pupils to progress at an appropriate pace and indicate the very small steps that pupils need to make to improve. This understanding of the pupils' individual needs allows both teachers and support staff to be proactive in engaging pupils in activities that capture their interest. However, the success at turning the good educational advice and plans into day-to-day learning experiences for pupils varies. On some occasions staff spend more time responding to pupils' anxieties and the behaviours associated with their condition than they do proactively engaging pupils in worthwhile activities. Although the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has been improved, some aspects of ICT remain underdeveloped in promoting academic learning.

Although there are good systems in place to record improvements in pupils' behaviour, the tracking and recording of pupils' academic progress is not yet fully in place. Pupils' individual educational plans identify mostly appropriate short-term targets along with strategies to be used, criteria for success and whether or not

targets have been met. Individual pupil successes are recorded in their achievement files. Since the previous inspection the school has tried a range of assessment schemes but does not yet have a whole-school system in place for all youngsters.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The school makes good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils with particular strengths in social and cultural development. Pupils' spiritual development is promoted through assemblies and lessons which give them the opportunity to think about other people. For example, in one assembly pupils were asked to think about how they could work together to achieve more and they enjoyed helping one another to get up from a sitting position. The school provides pupils with a rich array of cultural opportunities to learn about their own and other cultures. For example, some pupils were observed discussing photographs of Chinese New Year celebrations. Visits to shops, banks, art galleries and museums provide pupils with a broad understanding of English institutions.

There has been a strong focus on helping new pupils to settle into the school by providing safe spaces for them; some, because of their acute needs like to have their own rooms to work in. Well-structured routines have been established and these help to give pupils a sense of security. The school has a clear policy to promote socially acceptable behaviour and to encourage pupils to develop independence, self-control and self-esteem. Although the large majority of behaviour that was observed was securely satisfactory and some was good, there remain times when the behaviours of one or two pupils, often associated with their conditions, disrupt the learning and routines of others.

The caring environment and good relationships between staff and pupils is having a positive impact on many pupils' attitudes to school. This has resulted in a significant improvement in the attendance of many pupils. There are good links between home and school which encourages information to be shared though individual pupils' logs. Pupils have regular and frequent opportunities to contribute their views about their experiences at home and in school. These take place the beginning and end of the day in small groups where they review what they have done and what they will do next.

There are some good examples of the development of life skills. For example, pupils attend college part-time and some have work placements. Pupils in the post-16 provision and in Key Stage 4 groups are being prepared for life beyond the school by developing their functional skills in literacy, which will leave them well-placed to continue college courses in the future. Many of the older pupils value the opportunity to make a positive contribution to the school community and develop valuable work experience by working and preparing food in the school's bistro.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Good provision is made for pupils' welfare, health and safety throughout the school. The high staffing ratio and good relationships between staff and pupils ensures that pupils are safe. The school has a wide range of policies in place including policies for child protection and health and safety. Appropriate risk assessments are carried out in all areas of school life including for educational visits and fire. Accidents and incidents are properly recorded. The school fulfils its duties with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Pupils have access to outdoors and large indoor spaces for vigorous exercise. They participate enthusiastically in physical activities, such as playing football and particularly enjoy exercising on the trampoline. They are encouraged to eat healthily, for example, a good selection of healthy meals is available, which include salad, fresh fruit and yoghurt. Pupils choose what they want to eat confidently and independently, and clearly enjoy their food. A snack trolley is made available at break times and always has bottled water and fruit juice available.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Effective safeguards are in place to ensure that pupils do not encounter unsuitable adults. Checks with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) have been completed for all members of staff and those in regular contact with pupils. All the required information is kept in a single central record.

School's premises and accommodation

The accommodation is of a good quality, ensuring pupils' safety as well as enjoyment in their education. Teaching spaces are not large, but are of sufficient size for the individuals or small groups using them. Although there are some examples of displays which celebrate pupils' work in some classrooms, the use of display space to support learning across the school is underdeveloped.

Specialist facilities include a hydrotherapy pool, horticultural area with a greenhouse and an outdoor adventure playground. A gymnasium along with a good range of exercise equipment is used well each day. Pupils have regular access to the suitable and safe outdoor spaces. However, the outdoor area for the youngest, Key Stage 2 pupils, is underdeveloped. The dining room is complemented by a bistro which provides work experience and life skills for pupils. There are appropriate facilities in place for any pupils who are ill.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides parents, carers and others with almost all of the required information through the prospectus, pre-school handbook and website. There is a clear statement of the aims and curriculum of the school and the arrangements for

discipline. Parents are being made aware that they can access appropriate school policies, such as child protection, health and safety, anti-bullying and complaints procedures. The school provides parents with an annual written report on the progress of their child. However, where pupils are wholly or partly funded by a local authority, an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil is not submitted to the local authority.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a complaints policy and set of procedures, which meet all of the regulations. The school has taken steps to ensure that parents are aware of these.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The care provision was judged to be inadequate, and national minimum standards were not 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'), with the exception of those listed below.³ The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- provide a framework by which pupil performance can be evaluated by reference to either the school's own aims, as provided to parents and/or, by national norms (paragraph 1(4)).

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 where a pupil who is registered at the school is wholly or partly funded by the local authority, an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil is submitted to the local authority and on request to the Secretary of State (paragraph 6(8)).

Please see the report on Ofsted's website relating to the care provision in the children's home which should be read in conjunction with this report.

³ www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Improve the use of the learning environment both indoors and outside to provide greater support for pupils' learning, particularly in the primary area of the school.
- Further develop the use of ICT to support learning across the school.
- Improve the consistency of the quality of teaching across the school by checking that planning and educational advice is acted upon to provide good learning experiences for all pupils.

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 *(leave blank if not applicable)*

Evaluation of boarding provision				✓
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School details

Name of school	Barton School		
DCSF number	813/6004		
Unique reference number (URN)	134315		
Type of school	Special school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 2006		
Age range of pupils	8–19		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 16	Girls: 2	Total: 18
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of boarders	Boys: 11	Girls: 2	Total: 13
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 16	Girls: 2	Total: 18
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 8	Girls: 2	Total: 10
Annual fees (day pupils)	£79,116		
Annual fees (boarders)	£226,380		
Telephone number	01652 631280		
Fax number	01652 631299		
Email address	marke@optionsgroup.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mark Eames		
Proprietor	Options Group		
Reporting inspector	Amraz Ali HMI		
Dates of inspection	2-3 February 2010		