

Sands School

Independent school progress report

DCSF registration number	878/6042	Unique reference number	113619
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Age group: 11–17

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Purpose and scope of the visit

This inspection visit was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002¹, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005. The visit was conducted at the request of the Registration Authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan following the previous inspection.

Information about the school

Sands School is located in the town of Ashburton in Devon and provides education for young people aged 11–17 years. The school's education is based on the philosophy of democratic schooling: '... which puts students' social and emotional development at the heart of learning, to equip each young person to be an effective and contributing member of a free democratic society'. It is registered with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to admit up to 81 students. Currently 70 students are on roll, one of whom has a statement of special educational needs. There are 40 girls and 30 boys. Several have failed to thrive in their previous schools. Most places are privately funded, although a small number are funded by a charitable trust or by students' local authorities.

Context of the visit

The school was last inspected in May 2007 and the inspection found a number of failures to meet the requirements for registration. The school was required to produce an action plan to remedy these failures. Following the evaluation of this first action plan the school was visited to monitor its progress and then required, as a result, to submit a further action plan. This was accepted by the DCSF in January 2009. The purpose of this visit was to check whether the school had taken appropriate steps to address all the weaknesses identified within the original inspection report and to assess the progress it has made towards meeting the regulations. The Secretary of State issued a Notice, in April 2009, requiring the school to submit an action plan to address the issues identified by the previous inspections.

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

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

The school has made unsatisfactory progress in addressing the issues raised by the last inspection and contained within its action plan of 15 January 2009.

When inspected in May 2007 the school had weaknesses within its procedures to assess students' progress and a number of policies relating to students' welfare and safeguarding were judged to be unsatisfactory. The school did not carry out and record all the required checks on staff during the recruitment process. Additionally there were weaknesses within the school's provision for fire safety and the risk assessments and provision associated with this. The accommodation did not provide facilities for students who might become ill. The washroom facilities for staff and students were also insufficient and poorly designated for staff and student use. The information provided to parents had a number of omissions.

In its implementation of the first action plan the school made satisfactory progress in addressing the weaknesses within its assessment procedures. The school has since made further progress in this regard and can now be confident, based on the data that it collects, that it can form an accurate view about the progress made by its students. This information is used to adjust the future teaching plans to meet students' needs effectively.

The policies for anti-bullying, visits away from the school, health and safety and first-aid provision, all meet requirements. The school has made satisfactory improvement to these policies and their implementation since the last inspection. The first inspection in 2007 found that provision for safeguarding of students was ineffective and procedures were based on outdated guidance. Although some of these have improved there remain gaps within the arrangements. These include guidance which still does not fully or adequately reflect that provided by the Department for Children, Schools and Families in 2007. The school's policy provides insufficient guidance on staff recruitment procedures and does not require governors to compile an annual report about the effectiveness of how all the procedures are carried out. The policy does not provide guidance on the responses to be made where staff may be the subject of allegations of abuse. When matters of safeguarding arise, the ways in which allegations are documented and information and evidence files are maintained are inadequate.

The report of 2007 noted that current fire safety requirements were not met and the school had not undertaken a fire risk assessment. The school has since undertaken considerable work to update its fire precautions which included a professional fire risk assessment. This resulted in the installation of a centrally linked fire alarm system within the main building. Other procedures to support fire safety, such as emergency evacuation drills, fire appliance checks and testing of portable electrical equipment are rigorously carried out. The advice also recommended the installation of emergency lighting in all areas, which the school has completed. The school has detached blocks which house the art, science and woodwork facilities. None of these

buildings have any smoke or fire alarm provision. The school states that these buildings were included in the risk assessment of 2007 undertaken by a professional company. The company raised no concern. Despite this, the structure and contents of these buildings do give rise to a concern that they present a fire risk to the users, particularly on the first floor. The school should further review its fire safety.

The school maintains an admissions register and also attendance registers. These are not completed with the required details. The admissions register does not include all the information required, nor are the attendance registers completed by using the full range of recommended symbols.

Unsatisfactory progress has been made in matters relating to checking the suitability of the proprietorial body and staff. The school now operates robust procedures for the appointment of staff as well as those relating to the registration of the proprietor. Most of these details are appropriately recorded on a single register, but the school still fails to meet the requirement to check and record that all governors have the right to live and work within the United Kingdom. The single central register of staff checks is also incomplete.

An incomplete prospectus means that parents are currently not made aware of the full range of information they should be able to request. The school is in the process of constructing a new web site and prospectus that will provide all of the information required.

The school's progress towards the drawing up of a plan to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 is unsatisfactory. The plan is ineffective because it does not refer to the required resources, does not cover a period of three years and is unclear about how the outcomes will be evaluated. Parents are not made aware that they can request sight of a copy.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

As a result of this inspection visit, the school must take action to meet the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003² as amended ('the Regulations'), as follows:

- Prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with DCSF guidance 'Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education' (DCSF-04217-2006) (paragraph 3(2)(b)).
- Maintain an admissions register and an attendance register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 3(9)).

² www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm

- The chairperson should undertake and record checks on the right to live and work in the UK for other members of the proprietorial body (paragraph 4B (4&5)).
- Ensure that the single central register of staff check contains all the required information (paragraphs 4C(2&3), 4C(4)).
- Ensure that the single central register records checks are made by the chairperson on the other members of the proprietorial body in order to confirm their right to live and work in the United Kingdom (paragraph 4C(6 & 7)).
- Ensure that the school makes all parents aware of the information to which they are entitled as identified in paragraphs 6(2)(e), 6(2)(f), 6(2)(h), 6(2)(j) and 6(7).
- Prepare a three-year action plan by which the school will fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

School details

Name of school	Sands School		
DCSF number	878/6042		
Unique reference number	113619		
Type of school	Day school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1982		
Age range of pupils	11–17 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 29	Girls: 40	Total: 69
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,905		
Address of school	48 East Street Ashburton Newton Abbot Devon TQ13 7AX		
Telephone number	01364 653666		
Email address	enquiry@sandschool.demon.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Sean Bellamy		
Proprietor	Sands School		
Reporting inspector	Thomas Smith		
Dates of inspection	6 November 2009		