

The Old School House

Independent school progress report

DCSF registration number	873/6032
Unique reference number	133651
URN for social care	SC015266
Inspection number	344648
Inspection dates	22 October 2009
Reporting inspector	George Derby

This inspection visit to the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 at the request of the registering authority for independent schools.

Age group: 9 - 13

Published: 23 October 2009

Reference no: 090137

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404040, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No. 090137

© Crown copyright 2009



Purpose and scope of the visit

This inspection visit was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002.

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

The Old School House is an independent special school owned by the Chartwell group which also owns two other local special schools. The school is located on the site of a children's home in Friday Bridge, near Wisbech. It is currently registered for up to six residential pupils in aged eight to 13. The pupils have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and some have learning or language difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

At the time of the inspection, five pupils were on the school's roll; four live at the children's home. Three were aged 13 and included a day pupil funded by Norfolk local authority. However, the school is not registered for day pupils. There were two 15 year olds, their ages also outside the scope of the school's registration.

The children's home was last inspected in August 2008 when it was judged to be good.

The proprietor was not available at the time of the visit.

Context of the visit

This progress monitoring visit was arranged at the request of the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF). It evaluated the progress made in meeting the failed regulations identified at the last inspection in February 2008. This was the first visit since that time.

The school is operating outside the scope of its registration. It has applied to the DCSF for a change in its registration. However, there were failures of regulations which were not resolved by the several action plans submitted following the inspection. The last action plan was evaluated in August 2009. The material change requested could not be considered until a progress monitoring visit had been undertaken. This visit also covered the request made for the change of registration conditions, which is reported in a separate advice to the DCSF.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

The school has made inadequate progress since the last inspection and nearly all the regulations which were not met at that time are still not met. There were also additional important regulations that were found to be unmet during this visit.

The curriculum is not designed sufficiently to take account of pupils' needs and abilities through Key Stages 2, 3, 4 and post-16. The school does not have adequate schemes of work or other planning to support their learning and progress through these stages. Written planning seen during this visit outlined what pupils will cover over a year and had more detail for some subjects over each term; however, this information was about the topics undertaken and not about what pupils will learn. An outline plan for the curriculum over the number of years that pupils could be in the school was not available. Some subjects such as information and communication technology and physical education have no planning. The curriculum policy and individual subject policies do not provide an accurate summary of what will be provided throughout the year groups. There is no specific planning for Key Stage 4 or for post-16. The school has improved its careers guidance and now meets requirements.

The school does not take enough account of pupils' statements of special educational needs and discussion with staff during the visit revealed a lack of knowledge about the content of the statements. Additional support required, such as speech and language therapy, is not in place; specific programmes connected with language literacy and behaviour have not been designed for use in school and the full National Curriculum is not provided. All these are requirements of pupils' statements.

Assessment has not improved since the last inspection and there is a lack of understanding about what this should entail. Some tests relating to reading, writing, spelling and number are carried out but assessment when pupils enter the school and ongoing assessment are both inadequate. There is no system for tracking pupils' progress and the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are not sufficiently linked to procedures for recognising their achievement in relation to national norms or levels.

The analysis of pupils' files and records shows a considerable use of worksheets and work which does not build sufficiently on pupils' prior learning. Pupils' progress is inadequate and the curriculum does not enable pupils to make the progress they are capable of. The home does a sterling job in getting pupils back on the right track and on improving their self-esteem. However, the school fails to capitalise on this because of shortcomings in teaching and the curriculum. These include weaknesses in planning, a lack of knowledge of the pupils' needs and abilities and the failure to provide activities which build on their previous learning.

The school's workshop is well equipped and pupils enjoy the 'hands on', practical nature of the subject; they achieve well developing their wood and metal work skills.

However, health, safety and fire regulations are not met in relation to this area. There are no safety markings around equipment, although this is in hand. There is no isolation switch for power tools. It is not known whether the fabricated walling is fire-proof and there is no safety curtain for welding when this takes place. The school now has a three year accessibility plan, but this does not cover improved access to information.

The school has a single central register of the recruitment and vetting checks made on its staff. However, the full details of the proprietors are not included on this and it was not possible to confirm that all the required checks have been made on them.

Information is now provided to local authorities in relation to the how school fees are spent on each pupil's education.

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 2003¹ as amended ('the Regulations'), as follows:

- construct and implement curriculum policy set which is out in writing and is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work (paragraph 1(2))
- ensure that where pupils have a statement of special educational need, the education provided fulfil its requirements (paragraph 1(2)(e))
- for pupils above statutory school age, provide a programme of activities appropriate to their needs (paragraph 1(2)(h))
- ensure the curriculum enables all pupils to learn and make progress (paragraph 1(2)(i))
- ensure that the teaching enables pupils to acquire new knowledge, and make progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught (paragraph 1(3)(a))
- produce lessons which are well planned, use effective teaching methods, have suitable activities and use class time wisely (paragraph 1(3)(c))
- show a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensure these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 1(3)(d))

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm

- provide a framework to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use the information from such assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress (paragraph 1(3)(g))
- have in place 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))
- have regard to the DCSF guidance Health and Safety: responsibilities and powers (DCSF 0803/2001) (paragraph 3(4))
- have a satisfactory level of fire safety which complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (paragraph 3(5))
- fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended by the Special Educational Needs & Disability Act 2001
- ensure that evidence is made available that the chairperson has checked the other members of the proprietorial body to confirm their identity, right to work in the UK, enhanced CRB check, and where such checks are insufficient because the person has lived outside the UK, that additional checks are made (paragraph 4B (4) and (5))
- ensure that the single central register contains all the details on each member of proprietorial body (paragraph 4C (6) and (7))

School details

Name of school	The Old School House		
DCSF number	873/6032		
Unique reference number	133651		
Type of school	Special		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	February 1998		
Age range of pupils	8 - 13		
Gender of pupils	Boys		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 5	Girls: 0	Total: 5
Number of boarders	Boys: 5	Girls: 0	Total: 5
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 5	Girls: 0	Total: 5
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 5	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£57,540		
Annual fees (boarders)	£143,188		
Address of school	The Old School House c/o The Chartwell Group Goodens Lane Wisbech Cambridgeshire PE13 5HQ		
Telephone number	01945 861114		
Fax number	01945 861188		
Email address	headteacher@chartwellgroup.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Arie Ramp		
Proprietor	The Chartwell Group		
Reporting inspector	George Derby		
Dates of inspection	22 October 2009		