

# Cornfield School

Independent special school inspection report

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DCSF registration number	936/6581
Unique Reference Number (URN)	133477
Inspection number	348793
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Anne Duffy HMI

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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

Cornfield School provides placements for up to 25 girls between the ages of 11 and 18 years with predominantly social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. At the time of the inspection, there were 24 students on roll aged between 14 and 18 years. The large majority have a statement of special educational needs. All have a history of previously interrupted schooling, and individual circumstances continue to make it difficult for some students to attend school. The school is owned by Cornerways Children's Services Ltd and situated in Redhill. It originally opened in 2003 to provide educational experience for girls living in Cornerways' residential care homes. The school's mission statement describes it as 'dedicated to improving standards of education, achievement, life chances and choices for young women or children in or at risk of public care'.

The school was last inspected in October 2007. Since then, it has expanded to meet the needs of post-16 students and those who find re-entry to school particularly difficult. These students attend the recently established inclusion unit, situated a few miles from the main school.

## Evaluation of the school

The school provides students with a good education which is supported by well-focused pastoral care and sound safeguarding arrangements. It achieves its aims well and students' motivation and behaviour improve significantly during their time at the school. Curricular provision is good, as are teaching and assessment overall. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, in the context of their significant behavioural and social needs, is good. The school meets all the regulatory requirements. It has made a positive start in developing a rigorous standardised system of assessment and data collation, which was identified as an area for improvement in the last inspection.

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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)

## Quality of education

The quality of education is good, underpinned by a good curriculum. Curricular arrangements fulfil the requirements of students' statements of special educational needs. Since the last inspection, the range of academic pathways and vocational accreditation has been extended. Established pathways at Key Stages 3 and 4 lead to Entry Level and GCSE qualifications and vocational courses are accredited by the National College of Further Education (NCFE). Art, art history and biology are taught at AS and A levels. Curricular and extra-curricular opportunities which match students' interests are well linked to the school's ethos of providing 'nurture through structure'. Creative craft (hairdressing) has been very successfully introduced and has provided many students with the motivation to complete coursework and achieve at a level that they would not themselves have predicted. Opportunities for students to make full use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support and produce their coursework are affected to some extent by limited resources in this area.

Teaching and assessment are good overall. Strengths in teaching include the consistent management of behaviour and good relationships that encourage many students to persevere whereas before, they may have given up or become disruptive. A concerted move to change the way teaching assistants work has had a positive impact and all staff encourage students to try activities on their own, so that they may develop effective independent learning skills. This was evident in a mathematics lesson where one student worked with both a teacher and a teaching assistant. The teaching assistant provided an excellent role model by trying the work herself, while the teacher challenged the student to extend her own skills, so she could progress further and 'overtake' the assistant. The school now has thorough systems in place for setting targets and tracking students' progress. However, day-to-day assessment is not yet used consistently and assessment of student progress at the end of a lesson tends to be overshadowed by assessment of behaviour. As a result, in some lessons, students know how well they have behaved but not how successfully they have learnt.

Taking into account the history and ability of the students when they join the school, progress overall is good, and for some individuals it is outstanding. The majority of students build up a body of work which shows real progress even though for some this is affected by breaks in their attendance at school. They make the most progress when they are actively engaged in practical activities or can see the reason for learning something. Post-16 students benefit from being able to improve their social skills and take forward particular areas of interest. The school makes good links with support agencies and work experience providers, although it has found it harder to make sustained links with local colleges. Students receive the guidance and experiences which they need to prepare them for moving to the next stage in their education or working life. They particularly benefit from links made with the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) which supports them in running their own café at a sports centre for two days a week. Others appreciate the opportunity to catch up

with missed academic work and the fact that, as one girl said, school and learning can 'act as a retreat from all my problems'.

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

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students, which often starts from a very low base, is good. Many students enjoy the opportunity to develop skills that they did not know they had, for example, in sport, art and music and, most recently, in needlepoint. They respond well to the lessons learnt through projects in personal, social, health and citizenship education. They develop an awareness of other people's lives and cultures through themed events such as 'Africa Day'. The particular needs of students from minority backgrounds are treated sensitively and with respect. Membership of the school council is taken very seriously. The school leaders are aware that these meetings are sometimes taken over by the need for students to say how they feel, and so are driven by emotional needs rather than by the business agenda, and they are taking action to address this. However, through their councillor roles and other opportunities to contribute positively to the school community, students develop skills which will help their future economic and emotional well-being.

Students' behaviour is satisfactory. Although some find being tolerant difficult, the school's pastoral approach creates a positive and encouraging atmosphere to which students gradually respond. As a result, although always behaving well remains difficult for many, verbal or physical outbursts cause minimum disruption to the atmosphere of the school. For some students, attendance is still not good enough, but it is nevertheless significantly improved from previous placements. In collaboration with the students' homes, staff make every effort to bring students into school if the usual arrangements break down.

## Welfare, health and safety of the students

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good. Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place to safeguard students' safety and welfare, including the required staff training in children protection. The school has robust procedures for tackling incidents, including those involving bullying, and students are provided with good advice and guidance on issues such as cyber-bullying. Staff are aware of how to deal with incidents appropriately and records show an encouraging decrease in the use of restraint for individual students.

Students are at ease and open in their relationships with each other and with staff. The quality of supervision is extremely good and students feel safe when in school. The school is taking appropriate steps to ensure that the needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, such as autistic spectrum disorder, are met well, both in the main school and in the inclusion unit. There are ample opportunities off-site for students to take part in outdoor exercise and they make

good use of local facilities. The school effectively promotes an awareness of other aspects of healthy living, including healthy eating. Students are sensitively guided towards acceptable attitudes to sex, drinking and drugs and the school is taking an appropriately measured and proportionate approach to those who find it hard to give up smoking. Some students expressed concern that their confidences are not always well kept by staff. The inspection found no evidence that this is the case, although it is possible that students interpret the school's collaborative approach with the residential home units on care and education, as an intrusion into their privacy. The school is considering this issue carefully to see whether anything can be done to lessen the girls' anxieties.

Fire procedures and risk assessments for educational visits are employed well. First aid policies and procedures meet the regulations. The school has plans to further increase accessibility that comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

### Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The organisation checks all staff to ensure their suitability to work with children and the school keeps the required single central register. Head office staff who visit the school are also appropriately included in the register.

### School's premises and accommodation

The school is housed in a single-storey building that was formerly a children's nursery. It has been suitably adapted and provides safe, age-appropriate accommodation that is adequate for its purpose, although slightly cramped in some areas. A large extension provides very suitable accommodation for art and design, vocational education and whole-school events such as assemblies and staff training. The school has an attractive garden, containing both grassed and paved areas. All areas of the school and grounds are maintained very well and are in good decorative order, enhanced by the students' art work and other displays. One of the organisation's former residential houses has been adapted to provide an attractive, safe and appropriately equipped inclusion unit.

### Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides clear information in its informative prospectus. The reporting system, which includes annual reviews and reviews for children who are looked after, helps parents, carers and local authorities to be well informed about students' progress. The few parents or carers who responded to the questionnaire by the end of the inspection agreed with the views of placing authorities that the school generally meets the needs of students well.

## Procedures for handling complaints

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

## 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 points for development:

- increase the number of lessons in which students make outstanding progress by:
  - ensuring that lesson objectives always make clear what students will learn, rather than what they will do, and assist them in evaluating their own progress
  - making consistent use of ongoing in-class assessment of students' learning, as well as long-term planning, to accelerate their progress
  - improving, as far as possible, students' access to ICT to support their learning in every subject.

# 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 students		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of students' needs		✓		
How well students make progress in their learning		✓		

## Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of students			✓	

## Welfare, health and safety of students

The overall welfare, health and safety of students		✓		
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## School details

Name of school	Cornfield School
DCSF number	936/6581
Unique reference number (URN)	133477
Type of school	Secondary special school
Status	Independent
Date school opened	2003
Age range of students	14–18 years
Gender of students	Girls
Number on roll (full-time students)	22
Number on roll (part-time students)	2
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	17
Number of students who are looked after	13
Annual fees (day students)	£40,367.82
Address of school	53 Hanworth Road Redhill Surrey RH1 5HS
Telephone number	01737 773139
Fax number	01737 771927
Email address	cornfieldschool@cornerways.org
Headteacher	Jayne Telfer
Proprietor	Vivienne Spence (Cornerways Education Services Ltd.)
Reporting inspector	Anne Duffy HMI
Dates of inspection	18–19 May 2010