

Teaseldown School

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number	881/6060
Unique Reference Number (URN)	135837
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Reporting inspector	Judith Charlesworth

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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.

Information about the school

Teaseldown is an independent day special school that was registered in May 2009. It is located on the outskirts of Ridgewell, a small village near Haverhill in Suffolk. Teaseldown provides for up to eight students aged 11 to 16 years whose prime needs are behavioural, emotional and social resulting from various complex needs and difficulties. Students have statements of their special educational needs, and are referred and funded by their local authority. The school currently has two boys aged 13 and 14 on roll. Teaseldown combines therapeutic and educational provision to meet the students' needs. This is its first inspection. Teaseldown aims to:

- teach and nurture young people so that they take responsibility for their own behaviour and understand the underlying causes
- develop their confidence, self-belief and educational skills, knowledge and understanding, so that
- they perform better socially and academically, have improved health and a happier life, and make a valued contribution to the community.

Evaluation of the school

Teaseldown provides a good quality of education and makes good provision for students' health, safety and welfare. The school makes outstanding provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development due to its therapeutic approach, outstanding relationships and emphasis on community-based activities. Consequently, students' behaviour and attendance improve significantly. Safeguarding procedures, including child protection are good. Students make good academic progress although the framework for regular formal assessment of their attainment and progress is not yet robust enough. Teaseldown meets its aims and all but two of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The quality of educational provision is good and students make good academic progress which supports their future economic well-being. They develop their literacy

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

and numeracy skills, and make good gains in knowledge and understanding across a range of subjects. Students also develop interests and hobbies, such as fishing or rug and model making, which provide them with suitable leisure activities for the future. The curriculum is good. Staff are creative in providing a personalised curriculum for each student that stems from their statements of special educational needs and links subjects together according to individuals' interests. It develops core academic skills through diverse activities as well as focused lessons. Much of the curriculum takes place in the community. For example, aspects of geography are addressed through visits to towns, fishing or model aeroplane flying expeditions. Cooperative planning and discussion ensure that all staff are familiar with the entire curriculum provision for each student, and learning in one subject is reinforced throughout many activities. For example, a swimming lesson was used to reinforce a previous science lesson about sound waves. A kitchen-based science lesson using basic household foods and materials was highly successful in engaging the student and developing his scientific knowledge and understanding about acids and alkalis. The provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is good, and, combined with the personal and therapeutic support given, makes an outstanding contribution to students' overall progress and development. It supports students' choices for leading healthy and safe lives and helps them to make more appropriate contributions to the community, for example, by addressing 'green' issues. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used very well to support teaching and learning. The curriculum derives appropriately from National Curriculum programmes of study and various nationally accredited courses. All required areas of learning are included. However, staff know that their initial curriculum plans are over-ambitious. In practice, students' interests and sometimes erratic pace of learning result in the need to substantially change the planned curriculum at times. The staff have good plans to address this by rewriting the long-term plans in the immediate future.

The quality of teaching is good, and staff have many good skills. These include a detailed knowledge of each student's attainment and learning styles so that work can be carefully designed to meet their individual needs. The therapeutic aspect of the school's work is embedded in the ethos and structure of the day, as well as in focused one to one 'reflection' sessions. Consequently, staff have outstanding relationships with the students and give them the right support and encouragement to succeed. The students generally try hard and are proud of their achievements. A good baseline assessment is made of students' academic and personal skills on entry to the school which forms the basis for their individual education plan and personalised curriculum. Various further assessments are made periodically, and notes are carefully kept on students' achievements at the end of lessons and sessions. This provides staff with enough information to know what students should learn next, and how this should be achieved. However, the link into lesson planning is informal and the assessments do not include the regular assessment of students' small steps of progress. The notes on achievement do not usually relate to the learning objectives of the lesson and cannot contribute to a detailed picture of progress. Consequently, the framework for assessment is not robust enough to

identify specific gaps in students' knowledge, or used to inform written planning. This regulation, therefore, is not met.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. It is strongly underpinned by the school's therapeutic approach to supporting learning, and students' outstanding relationships with staff.

The supportive environment helps students to understand what underlies their difficulties, to come to terms with it and to express their emotions in an acceptable way. This helps them to re-engage with learning and develop pride in their work. The students' behaviour and attendance are good, which is a marked contrast with both aspects in previous settings. There have been no exclusions since the school opened. As a result of their much improved attitudes, the students' skills develop and their self-esteem grows. This greatly improves their chances for future economic well-being. The students' response to the staff's support is outstanding. For example, one student noticed that staff were preparing for the inspection and promised that he 'wouldn't let them down'. Students clearly know right from wrong and understand that both positive and negative actions and choices have associated consequences. Their social development is outstanding and supports an increasingly positive contribution to the school and wider community. The school is a very pleasant place to visit and students enjoy being there, for example, spontaneously joining in with the staff to sing songs around the kitchen table. They show real interest in their work and add their own thoughtful contributions, for example, considering features of society, such as football grounds, from different peoples' viewpoints. Students relate well to others, show respect for property, and understand how societies function and the public services and institutions within them. The school believes that students should be in the community as much as possible to practise and reinforce their developing skills. Students rise to the challenge and meet the social targets set for them. Students' cultural development is supported by their involvement in a wide range of community-based activities and visits, and by curricular foci on aspects such as the art of different cultures, tolerance and the implications of racism.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

The provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good. All the required policies and practices to safeguard students and minimise health and safety risks are in place and effectively implemented. Staff training is fully up to date. Child protection procedures are robust and underpinned by an appropriate policy. Suitable attention is paid to assuring fire safety and students' overall safety. Recommendations made at the school's registration visit have been appropriately addressed. Risk assessments are made of various activities and off-site visits, and each student has a thorough risk assessment and associated management plan which help minimise incidents very effectively. The school has a three-year

accessibility plan as required by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. However, the attendance register is not kept properly, and this regulation is not met.

The school makes outstanding provision for students' personal and emotional well-being with a particular emphasis on supporting their emotional health. Teaseldown provides a safe, caring environment in which students flourish. Their mental health is very well supported by the therapeutic approach. Staff work closely with parents to support students' relationships and well-being, and parents' comments show how appreciative they are of the school's work and the positive effect on their sons. Students with sleep and eating difficulties are supported very well, for example by developing a more acceptable diet through the communal approach to food preparation and meals, and by an increasing understanding of how to manage their difficulties. Healthy eating is reinforced, and sport and exercise are an important part of each student's personalised curriculum. The school teaches students to stay safe and make safe choices through focused reflection sessions, and by frequent reference to safety in general discussions, in lessons and when in the community.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All regulations are met in relation to the safe recruitment of staff, and the single central register of checks is completed as required.

School's premises and accommodation

Teaseldown occupies a spacious, detached four bedroom house with a large, attractive garden which backs on to a park. The premises are rented. The house was selected deliberately to provide a homely, non-institutional environment to support the therapeutic aspect of the school's work. The accommodation meets requirements and enables students to learn safely and effectively. The large family kitchen is used for some subjects such as food technology and science, for meals, and for informal gatherings throughout the day. The garden is used at break times, for family-style meals and for small-scale horticulture. The staff office is situated in an upstairs room, and all other rooms are used flexibly for education and therapy provision. They are well furnished and in good decorative order, enhanced by displays of students' work and commercial posters to support and celebrate learning.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school's prospectus is up to date and contains all the required information including a list of additional information, policies and documents that are available on request. The attractive website is easy to use and contains much of this and additional information, including the school's safeguarding policy and a students' section which they update regularly themselves. Satisfactory termly reports are written on the students' progress, but no annual reports have yet been written. These are due to be completed for the first time in July 2010. The school makes an

appropriate contribution to the annual reviews of students' statements of special educational needs.

Procedures for handling complaints

The policy and procedure for dealing with complaints meet regulations.

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:

- establish a framework to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and ensure that information from such assessment is utilised to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress (paragraph 1(3)(g)).

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

- maintain an attendance register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) regulations 2006 (paragraph 3(9)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Develop more detailed plans for the regular daily sessions, such as breakfast and break times, to indicate the learning foci for each individual.

³ www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.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	Teaseldown School		
DCSF number	881/6060		
Unique reference number (URN)	135837		
Type of school	Special		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	16 April 2009		
Age range of pupils	11–16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 2	Girls: 0	Total: 2
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 2	Girls: 0	Total: 2
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£48,500		
Address of school	Mill Road Ridgewell Essex CO9 4SG		
Telephone number	01440 785566		
Email address	admin@exceptional-ideas.co.uk		
Headteacher	Hazel Bunting		
Proprietors	Hazel Bunting and Brett Runchman		
Reporting inspector	Judith Charlesworth		
Dates of inspection	26–27 May 2010		