

My Choice School – Ocean Pearl

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number	938/6272
Unique Reference Number (URN)	135111
URN for registered childcare and social care	SC014650
Inspection number	354687
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Angela Corbett HMI
Social care inspector	Lucy Martin HMI

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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 Education 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

My Choice School – Ocean Pearl is a school and children's home registered for up to three young people aged between 11 and 16 who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is owned by My Choice Children's Homes Ltd. All students who attend must be resident at a My Choice children's home. Currently there are three Key Stage 4 students on roll in the school, one of whom has a statement of special educational needs for emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school was registered in 2006 and was last inspected in December 2007. The children's home received its last social care inspection in February 2010 and was judged to be good overall.

The school aims are: 'to enhance the self-esteem of all students and to promote positive behaviour; to develop achievement and skills in all students; to involve students and parents/carers in a holistic approach to education and to build a successful partnership between home and school; and to prepare students for adult life'.

Evaluation of the school

My Choice School – Ocean Pearl provides a satisfactory quality of education and successfully meets its stated aims, in particular in preparing students for the next steps of their education. Students are very well supported by caring staff and they take great pride in their achievements. However, their independence in learning is less well developed. High priority is placed on students' welfare, health and safety with some strong arrangements in place. Although there was a minor weakness with respect to safeguarding; provision for welfare is satisfactory overall. The quality of the boarding provision is good. The school has made some improvements since the last inspection and now meets all but one of the regulations for registration as an independent school.

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

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory; it is broadly aligned to the National Curriculum and based on the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) Unit Award scheme which also provides the main framework for assessment. The school ensures that it has a good understanding of students' personal needs, abilities and current attainment levels on entry, tailoring the curriculum satisfactorily. This includes providing teaching at local colleges or the nearby Additional Learning Centre; for example, one student attends a local college to study horticulture for one day a week. However, the school acknowledges that at times there is insufficient challenge in the curriculum while arrangements are being made or students are settling into the school. The school's close links with external providers very successfully support students' learning as they enable the school to provide support in the classroom for off-site courses. There is a strong emphasis on English, mathematics, art and physical education (PE) as well as on personal development through lessons in life skills and personal, social and health education (PSHE). The technological and science aspects of the curriculum are less well developed. Use of local facilities such as the library, local parks and a leisure centre extends the range of activities for students and promotes their contact with the local community.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory. There is one teacher at the school who provides all the in-school teaching to the three students. The teacher is often appropriately supported by members of staff from the children's home as well as by the school's headteacher, who also has responsibility for the other education provision made by My Choice. The size of the classroom restricts teaching to one student in each lesson. Consequently, students' timetables are crafted around supported self-study, off-site provision, such as college or PE, or using additional space in the home such as for cookery as part of life-skills lessons. As a result, there are very few opportunities for group work or a shared start to the school day. Good relationships between staff and students and much use of praise and encouragement help to support learning. Planning for groups of lessons is mostly based on the selected units which form the AQA award scheme. When these do not meet the needs of students, the school writes its own 'My Choice' units of learning, for example, in GCSE mathematics. However, while planning takes account of prior learning, it does not sufficiently focus on the work to be completed. As a result, students are not always sufficiently clear about what they are expected to learn in a lesson. Teaching approaches, activities and tasks do not always engage students or develop independence. Similarly, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enliven learning or develop students' ICT skills is underdeveloped. In a few instances, insufficient work is provided or tasks do not sufficiently challenge the students.

Lesson-by-lesson assessment is thorough and reflects accurately what students have achieved as well as their progress towards the different AQA Unit Awards. This information is used well to track progress against students' targets in their individual

education plans. However, students are not always clear about how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve. Progress varies between students in terms of their personal and academic achievement, but is satisfactory overall. The school has yet to introduce a system to track students' work against National Curriculum levels.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. They join the school with complex and severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and most have had poor prior experience of education. Consequently a key focus of the school is to encourage and support students to develop their confidence and self-esteem which they successfully do. Students' enjoyment of school is dependent on the subject, task or relevance to them of the work, but overall they enjoy their time in school. Students' attendance is variable, reflecting their difficulties. Their personal circumstances can impact negatively on attendance and, on some occasions, the home's systems to support attendance at school are not effective. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. It improves over time and students become more aware of how to behave, both in and out of school, and how to socialise with others. There are opportunities for students to reflect on their behaviour but few times when students can reflect on events in the wider world. The school makes adequate provision to develop students' cultural understanding and their knowledge of public services and institutions, but this would benefit from further development. Most positive contributions to students' personal development come through the home, where, for example, students contribute informally to staff appointments. Regular meetings in the home help students to express their views about the quality of its provision; however, this does not currently include any similar discussion around the provision in the school. Students earn points in recognition of their successes in lessons and these contribute to rewards in the home. Students are well supported for the next steps in their learning beyond Key Stage 4 through careers interviews, college visits and help with preparing for interviews.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

The provision for ensuring students' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. Strong systems, many in close conjunction with the home, promote students' welfare, health and safety with all the appropriate policies and procedures in place. The anti-bullying policy has been updated since the last inspection. It now meets requirements and provides good guidance for staff. Risk assessments for activities both in and outside school are in place, in line with the school's policy and procedures. The policy and procedures for managing behaviour support students with severe behavioural and emotional problems and are closely linked to those of the home. As a result, school and residential staff work together effectively to promote improvements in students' behaviour and social skills, although this has been less successful in improving attendance. All incidents and sanctions are carefully recorded and regularly reviewed.

The required training for child protection is in place and up to date for staff in the school and the home. Child protection policies and procedures are in place and include what to do if allegations are made against staff. However, the policy required amendment during the inspection to fully meet requirements. Most of the arrangements for fire prevention are good; however, the fire doors to the kitchen where students eat and cook are sometimes propped open. Fire risk assessments are regular and any required actions are attended to. Fire drills are held regularly. Fire prevention and electrical equipment checking procedures fully meet the requirements.

Students are developing a good understanding of how to stay safe, including the use of new technologies, and live a healthy lifestyle. This is supported well by the home staff. Exercise is a routine feature of their lives through, for example, running, visiting the gym or skateboarding. The policy for first aid and associated staff training are up to date and all accidents are recorded.

The admission and attendance registers comply with the regulations. The school has in place a three-year action plan indicating how it will fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has checked the suitability of all staff and the proprietors to work with children and has in place rigorous appointment procedures. The single central record shows all the required information although it was amended in a minor aspect during the inspection to show that further checks for staff from overseas had been made.

School's premises and accommodation

The school and children's home are located in a detached house which is well decorated, including the classroom, which is an improvement since the last inspection. There are pleasant garden areas to the rear, front and side of the house which are used for recreational purposes. There is also access to a large kitchen area which is used for activities related to cookery and for meal times and to a spacious lounge; both are used for teaching on some occasions. The single classroom is very small and it is not appropriate for teaching three students. This has a negative impact on students' learning.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides a good range of information for parents, carers and others through its prospectus, the student handbook and the My Choice website. Termly reports provide good detail on how well students are making progress and these contribute to their placement reviews and, when needed, reviews of students' statements of special educational needs. The school now provides the appropriate

financial information to local authorities in respect of each student registered at the school.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a clear complaints policy which fully meets requirements.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The care provision was judged to be good, and national minimum standards were 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 the one listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide classrooms that are appropriate to the number, age and needs (including any special needs) of students to allow effective teaching (paragraph 5(j)).

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.

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 teaching so that students make better progress in their learning by ensuring that:
 - students are clear in each lesson what they are going to learn
 - learning activities and tasks are varied and interesting
 - more use of ICT is incorporated into lessons to enliven learning and develop students' ICT skills
 - students' independence in learning is promoted.

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

- Provide further opportunities for students to reflect on issues outside the school, broaden their horizons and develop greater knowledge of the world around them.

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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The quality of boarding provision

Evaluation of boarding provision		✓		
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School details

Name of school	My Choice School – Ocean Pearl		
DCSF number	938/6272		
Unique reference number (URN)	135111		
Type of school	Children’s home providing education for students with behavioural, emotional, social and learning difficulties		
Status	Independent special school		
Date school opened	December 2006		
Age range of students	11–16 years		
Gender of students	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 1	Girls: 1	Total: 2
Number on roll (part-time students)	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Number of boarders	Boys: 1	Girls: 2	Total: 3
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 2	Total: 3
Annual fees (boarders)	Available on request		
Address of school	C/O My Choice Homes Ltd Unit 3a, Mill Green Industrial Estate Mill Green Road Haywards Heath West Sussex RH16 1XQ		
Telephone number	01444 446920		
Fax number	01444 446929		
Email address	a.murphy@my-choice-homes.com		
Headteacher	Ms Annie Murphy		
Proprietor	My Choice Children’s Homes Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Angela Corbett HMI		
Dates of inspection	23–24 June 2010		