

The Old School House

Independent school progress report

DCSF registration number	873/6032
Unique Reference Number (URN)	133651
URN for social care	SC015266
Inspection number	361136
Inspection dates	26 May 2010
Reporting inspector	George Derby

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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 2005². 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. It is currently registered for up to six residential students, aged 8 to 13 years. The students have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and most have learning or language difficulties. All students have a statement of special educational needs.

At the time of the inspection, five students were on the school's roll; four live at the children's home. Three were aged 13 and included a day student funded by a nearby local authority. Two students were of school leaving age. The school is not registered for students above the age of 13, or for day students. However, it is seeking to rectify this and has applied for a change to its registration.

A new teacher/headteacher took over the leadership of the school in January 2010.

Context of the visit

This progress monitoring visit was arranged at the request of the Department for Education. It evaluated the school's progress in meeting the failed regulations identified at the time of the last monitoring visit in October 2009. The school's last inspection was in February 2008 and a random social care inspection of the children's home took place in February 2010, when it was judged to be good.

Several action plans were submitted following the last school inspection. An action plan was again written following the monitoring visit in October and was evaluated in January 2010. This was deemed to be inadequate and another plan was examined during this visit.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

The school has made satisfactory progress in addressing the regulations not met at the time of the last progress monitoring visit. Most regulations are now met and the school is generally on course to meet those which are not met.

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

At the time of the last visit, the school wished to extend its age range to 18 years. It has now decided to seek registration for up to six residential students and one day student aged from 11 to 16 years. On the basis of the improvement made by the school, this change is now recommended.

The accommodation has been markedly transformed, with greater classroom space available for students and a better organised and laid out workshop which meets all fire and health and safety regulations. Power equipment can now be electrically isolated, there is demarcation of space around the tools and a fire officer has confirmed that the wall dividing the workshop from the garage is fire resistant. An area for welding has been designated with a protective screen in place.

The single central register of the vetting and recruitment checks made on staff is now fully completed and includes the required details about the proprietors.

Work has been undertaken to improve the curriculum and it is intended that the full implementation of the new curriculum arrangements will take place at the beginning of the autumn term. Although the curriculum policy does not fully reflect what is to be provided in Key Stage 3 and the pathways, options and accreditation in Key Stage 4, other documents show these developments. The school knows its needs to combine all this information into a coherent policy.

The subjects and activities taught are now largely underpinned by schemes of work, although not all are yet in place. The school's most recent action plan is not detailed enough in outlining the timelines for the schemes and programmes to be put in place at each stage. However, the school's documentation shows that it has prioritised the schemes to be drawn up. Current medium-term planning links to long-term plans in English, mathematics, science, art, technology/ workshop, information and communication technology, humanities and personal, social and health education and citizenship. The planning in place clearly aids students' progress because it builds on their previous experiences and learning. However, for physical education, photography, and cooking, schemes are planned to be in place by September 2010. Music is to be taught in September and French is to be taught linked to the school's visit to France this summer term. The action plan shows that these will be written prior to them being taught, which is acceptable.

The school has a much better understanding of the students' statements of special educational needs but does not yet fully meet the requirements. The teacher has thoroughly examined the statement objectives and linked the students' individual education plan targets to these. There is a clearer view of how the students' needs can be planned for, especially in relation to their most significant barriers to their learning. However, the requirement for the provision of the National Curriculum is not yet met because not all subjects are to be fully taught until September. In addition, the school is looking into how it can provide speech and language therapy, as identified on one student's statement.

Lesson plans mostly show clearly what students are to learn, and activities develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in small steps. A weakness is in the

planning of lessons by care staff who tend to focus on the completion of activities rather than learning. While lessons are well paced for more able students, for those who find learning difficult, they are not always broken up enough into small amounts of time. Planning is based on an analysis of students' statements and the assessments regularly made. Work is matched satisfactorily to the students' abilities. A framework for assessment is in place which measures students' attainment and progress using National Curriculum levels and criteria for those working at very early levels. However, information about students' learning and the tracking of their progress is not yet fully in place for all subjects, although this is part of the school's planned development.

A three year plan now addresses how the school will improve its accessibility to its information.

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 2003³ as amended ('the Regulations'), as follows:

- construct and implement a curriculum policy which is set out in writing and is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work (paragraph 1(2))
- ensure that where students have a statement of special educational needs, the education provided fulfils its requirements (paragraph 1(2)(e))
- ensure the all aspects of the curriculum enable all students to learn and make progress (paragraph 1(2)(i))
- produce lessons which are well planned, use effective teaching methods, have suitable activities and use class time wisely (paragraph 1(3)(c))
- provide a framework to assess students' work regularly and thoroughly and use the information from such assessment to plan teaching so that students can make progress (paragraph 1(3)(g))

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

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 students	8–13		
Gender of students	Boys		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 5	Girls: 0	Total: 5
Number of boarders	Boys: 5	Girls: 0	Total: 5
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 5	Girls: 0	Total: 5
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 5	Girls: 0	Total: 5
Annual fees (day students)	£57,540		
Annual fees (boarders)	£143,188		
Telephone number	01945 861114		
Fax number	01945 861188		
Email address	headteacher@chartwellgroup.co.uk		
Headteacher	Bernice Jackson		
Proprietor	The Chartwell Group		
Reporting inspector	George Derby		
Dates of inspection	25 May 2010		