

Kisimul School

Independent Special School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	925/6034
Unique Reference Number	120740
URN for Social care	SC034241
Inspection number	334293
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Alan Lemon
Social care inspector	Mick Walklin

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005). The inspection of boarding was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 08456 404040

www.ofsted.gov.uk



Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

An inspection of the boarding provision was also carried out. The full report on this provision is not published but may be obtained from Ofsted by telephoning 08456 404040.

This was a light touch educational inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding students and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Kisimul School occupies two sites in Lincolnshire. The main school in Swinderby caters mainly for students between 8 and 16 years old. It also has a few students who are over 16 years old. Most post-16 students are educated at Acacia Hall, 20 miles away in Friesthorpe. There are 58 students on roll, 31 of whom are post-16 students. The school provides residential provision at both sites, which is reported on separately. The school is registered to take up to six day students. Currently there is one on roll. All of the students have a statement of special educational needs. They have severe learning difficulties, challenging behaviour and a very low level of attainment compared with age related expectations. The majority also have an autism spectrum disorder. The school's aims are to develop students' communication and social interaction skills, improve their independence skills, increase their confidence and self-esteem, modify their challenging behaviours, engage them in learning and promote their progress in acquiring an essential range of basic skills. The school's last educational inspection took place in September 2006.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of education is outstanding leading to students at both sites making excellent progress. Their severe learning difficulties, autism and challenging behaviours are understood thoroughly. This is the result of the commitment of all staff, their professionalism and the development of considerable expertise. These have driven the continual and substantial improvements across the whole school in curriculum, teaching and assessment and student's personal development. All of the regulations that were not met at the time of the previous inspection now meet requirements.

The school works in very close partnership with the residential provision, supporting much of what is outstanding in the provision and outcomes for students.

Quality of education

The outstanding curriculum provides a very firm foundation for the school to achieve all of its educational aims in an exemplary way. The previous inspection judged the curriculum to be good and it has improved considerably since then. Improvement is the result of the energy, commitment and expertise invested by the head of education, the leadership team and the whole staff. This is ensuring students' work and activities keep pace with change, remain relevant and are increasingly effective in meeting their needs. A key strength of the curriculum is that it focuses sharply on opportunities for students to develop key skills appropriate to their age and needs. This extends in extremely effective ways to the support offered by residential provision, where students' programmes are expertly planned to further curriculum aims. Very low attainment means knowledge and understanding are not the first priority. As a result, work and activities related to all the National Curriculum programmes of study for Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 are suitably adapted to prioritise skills such as those associated with communication, social interaction and independence. All of the skills of literacy and numeracy are very effectively promoted. The high level of professional expertise invested in the curriculum is revealed in the provision promoting these skills. There is real desire to understand the best ways for students to learn and make progress, which results in the implementation of complementary approaches such as 'Exercise and Sound in Education' aimed at stimulating responses and brain functioning.

The planning going into students' work and activities is driven by thorough assessments made by teachers, speech therapists and educational psychologists. Assessment elicits clear individual learning objectives, which are matched to each student's statement of special educational needs and which build very effectively on their attainments with a wide range of appropriate learning opportunities. This ensures that they make substantial progress. The planning, especially of topic work, achieves an enjoyable variety of experiences that engage and challenge the students. One particularly good feature comes from the efforts to give students real-life opportunities in which to apply what they have learnt in the classroom: for example, they go out frequently to use shops, cafes and libraries where all of their skills are put to the test.

The curriculum for Key Stage 4 and post-16 students also includes many good opportunities to gain accreditation through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network's (ASDAN) courses; Transition Challenge at Key Stage 4; Towards Independence and the Certificate in Life Skills. In themselves, these courses provide a great deal that is relevant to students and they have been extremely well adapted to meeting their needs. New 14–19 curriculum developments are being implemented in a pilot programme with ASDAN to test the Adult Pre-entry and Entry Curriculum frameworks. This fits effectively into the well-established organisation of accredited courses and is contributing positively to further curriculum development.

The post-16 curriculum based in Friesthorpe is outstanding in its own right. There is excellent and well-established provision for vocational and work-related learning, closely integrated into the opportunities for accreditation. This has been recognised

by the recent award of Career Mark. All of the learning resources to support this are exemplary, in particular the school's horticultural and animal care facilities. These add considerably to the breadth of learning opportunities, contributing hugely to students' excellent preparation for the future. All of this is complemented by an increasing variety of work experience and work-related learning in the community, such as work placements in shops and hairdressers.

Teaching and assessment are outstanding, gaining strong impact on learning from the teachers' and others' very effective implementation of the curriculum in the classroom and beyond. Thorough multi-disciplinary assessment results in the staff knowing students extremely well. This leads to very positive relationships eliciting high levels of response and interaction by students which in turn helps to promote very effective learning. The key support for learning comes from the use of assessment and students' individual objectives to plan their lessons. This gives work a sharp focus, matching it to each student's needs and ensuring work is challenging. Continuous assessment and recording keep a close track on the often very small steps in progress students are capable of making. Teaching is lively and students experience fun and enjoyment in learning, which is a positive motivation to make progress. The high level of well-trained staff means students are offered a high level of support and encouragement. It also means that their challenging behaviour is managed extremely effectively and does not get significantly in the way of their progress.

The high quality of educational provision and support for students leads to them making outstanding progress. This is clearly evidenced in lessons, their work, records and in personal development. They make substantial headway in communication, particularly because of the many well-developed strategies using symbols and signing. Excellent progress is also reflected in students' annual reports and in the very positive comments about progress made by their parents and local authorities. Notwithstanding this, the school's means of demonstrating progress lacks some robustness because assessment, recording and reporting are not focused sharply enough on describing or attempting to quantify the amount of progress students make over set periods of time.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding because of both the significant impact of educational provision, and the care and support in school and in residential hours. The barriers to communication, social interaction and independence caused by students' severe learning difficulties and challenging behaviour are removed extremely effectively. As a result, students experience and engage with the world around them in increasingly meaningful ways and are able to contribute very effectively. They become more aware of their feelings and are better able to order their thoughts. They become aware of, and learn to know, others, forming good relationships and making a positive start to social development.

The many opportunities in school and beyond extend significantly their social awareness and skills. The expert management of their behaviour means many students are able to exercise greater self-control and understand right and wrong. As a result, students' behaviour is outstanding. All of this prepares them extremely well for the future. They enjoy school thoroughly. Attendance is at a high level and students are very positive about learning. Topic work leads to many students learning about countries of the world and their different cultures. In school, they make art, listen to and perform music.

Safeguarding students' welfare, health and safety

The arrangements for students' welfare, health and safety are good overall. The great majority of welfare arrangements continue to be of high quality and often outstanding, in school and in the residential provision. In both of the schools and their respective residential provisions, students are in most respects exceptionally well cared for and supported in relation to their emotional, physical and any medical needs they might have. A healthy lifestyle is promoted outstandingly in school and residential provision by providing a good diet, exercise and health education. The staff, available in large numbers and always on hand, are particularly knowledgeable and well-trained in giving them support and managing their behaviour. In school, students stay safe because risk assessment and close attention to all matters of health and safety are of a high order. The school responds positively to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, and reviews and updates its access plan on a regular basis. Significant incidents are referred on to the appropriate authorities where applicable. However, despite informing Ofsted by telephone, one notification was not followed up in writing as required.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The residential provision was judged to be good with many outstanding features. A full report on this provision is published separately by Ofsted.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005. It must, however, meet fully the National Minimum Standards for Children's Homes by ensuring that any notification regarding a serious incident which is made orally to Ofsted is also confirmed in writing.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- strengthen the reporting of, and the methods for analysing, students' progress.

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	Kisimul School		
DCSF number	925/6034		
Unique reference number	120740		
Type of school	Special		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	February 1977		
Age range of students	8–19		
Gender of students	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 48	Girls: 10	Total: 58
Number of boarders	Boys: 47	Girls: 10	Total: 57
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 48	Girls: 10	Total: 58
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 47	Girls: 10	Total: 57
Annual fees (day students)	£114,496		
Annual fees (boarders)	£138,202 - £288,533		
Telephone number	01522 868279		
Fax number	01522 868775		
Email address	JeanGardner@kisimul.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Jean Gardner		
Proprietor	Kisimul Group Limited		
Reporting inspector	Alan Lemon		
Dates of inspection	11–12 May 2009		