

Kisimul School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	936/6593
Unique Reference Number	135577
URN for social care	SC367623
Inspection number	333806
Inspection dates	10 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Linda Kelsey HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended. The inspection of boarding was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 in February 2009.

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

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, 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. This report refers to the educational provision only.

A separate inspection of the welfare provision was carried out in February 2009. The full report on this provision is not published but may be obtained from Ofsted by telephoning 08456 404040.

Information about the school

Kisimul School, Woodstock House provides education and care for 12 young people from the ages of 11-19. All have a statement of special education need; the majority of the pupils have an autistic spectrum disorder, sensory needs and extremely limited communication and social skills. Eleven of the twelve children are looked after and two do not have English as their principle language. They are taught in small mixed age groups according to their personality and needs.

The school aims to engage students in their learning and promote their progress in basic skills as well as meeting their specific learning difficulties and disabilities. The school has no particular religious affiliation. The school opened in June 2008 and currently has 4 full time qualified teachers, 6 teaching assistants and other care and support staff. The school was registered in May 2008 and this is its first inspection.

Evaluation of the school

This is a good school which has quickly established itself as a centre for pupils with profound learning difficulties and disabilities. The large site, accommodation and beautiful grounds provide a high quality setting in which pupils can adjust to learning how to interact with others, gain basic skills and become confident individuals. The curriculum and teaching are carefully and meticulously planned to meet the needs of the individuals and to care for them in a secure place. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good; relationships between staff and pupils support the improving good behaviour. Although not able to express their views themselves, pupils can demonstrate that they enjoy the experiences provided through their infectious smiles and whoops of delight when something goes well for them. This was shown clearly when they prepared the fruit, added the ice cream and milk and then drank the strawberry and banana smoothy they had made themselves. Procedures for ensuring the safeguarding of students are rigorous. The issues raised at the registration visit about fire regulations and a three year development plan for accessibility to the site are now in place. The school meets all the regulations for registration as an independent school.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good as it provides for a wide range of activities based on themed work and core skills which provide pupils with a range of experiences both in and outside the school. Work is still to be done in developing the physical education and scientific aspects of the curriculum once more resources have been developed. Policies are in place and detailed planning takes account of individual needs based on prior knowledge and detailed and thorough assessment of pupils. There is some good evidence of work by pupils and ongoing recording of what they are covering in curriculum time. The majority of the curriculum time rightly focuses on literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills. Other times are devoted to enabling pupils to take part in physical exercise through swimming or physical education, cooking and shopping to develop independence, and eco and horticultural projects. Therapies and on-going treatment for their medical needs are also a large part of the daily work of staff and pupils. Pupils enjoy taking part in the woodland walk and music therapy which add range and variety as well as supporting them in achieving their individual targets and aspirations.

Teaching is good and as a result, pupils are making good progress at the school from very low starting points when they arrive. This is because teachers are well prepared and use resources well to motivate and engage the pupils. There is a high level of commitment and cooperative working between teaching staff, care staff and teaching assistants who all know their role and work extremely well together as a team.

Subject knowledge is good and teachers understand what the pupils need to accomplish next. Work is organised according to need and meets the challenging behaviour of the pupils well. All pupils have a comprehensive individual pupil care plan which draws on previous knowledge and assessment. Assessments are carried out, during the lessons, recording the smallest steps of achievement through photographs and notes so that these can be shared with each other and the staff. No small achievement goes unnoticed. All pupils have statements of special educational need because of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As a consequence there are high levels of staff support. Techniques developed to meet their different needs are focused rightly on improving communication and social interaction. In addition, there are annual reviews, weekly records of achievements and testing by diagnostic testing and expert evaluations

Pupils are making good and significant progress since beginning at the school. All have been at the school for less than a year and some for only a few days. They settle quickly and form good relationships with key staff. This is paramount to their future personal development and eventual outcome in being able to live some of their life independently. The good progress is being made because teachers are clear about what small steps the pupils need to make in their learning to become confident individuals who can relate to others around them in a positive way.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils appreciate what the staff are doing for them and show a warm regard and affection for those who care for them. They are making a much better contribution to the community and most are actively engaging in school life and what it offers for a majority of the time.

Pupils' moral and social development is good; behaviour is generally good and well controlled by staff. Relationships are very well developed between staff and pupils so that anyone who begins to cause a disruption is dealt with quickly and before it can escalate.

Attitudes to work are improving all the time as pupils settle to tasks and sustain concentration for longer periods. Occasionally pupils become agitated but these situations are dealt with sympathetically and calmly. Pupils are accompanied by staff to either of the soft rooms in order to calm down and re-assess for themselves the point at which they want to re-join the class. In this way, they are beginning to make choices for themselves within a well structured and caring environment.

Through their trips and visits into the community, pupils are beginning to understand the differences between each other. Comments from pupils such as 'he is doing well today,' show a sympathy and an understanding that indicates their developing maturity. The on-going work of improving how pupils look after themselves and perhaps do things for others, are all contributing to pupils being able to make better choices for their future. The Kisimul café and horticultural activities have given pupils opportunities to experience selling goods they have helped to produce themselves. The Connexions service and other partners work closely to broaden the horizons for as many as possible.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety in the school is good. The school has policies for the welfare, health and safety of all its pupils, whether they are in school or studying off site. It recognises that the pupils are vulnerable and although unable to communicate this for themselves, parents report that their children are happier and calmer people since attending the school. The placing local authorities have endorsed the good work of the school. Pupils present as generally happy individuals who relate well to the adults that support them. They are constantly supported by an adult, mostly in a one-to-one situation and their safety and well-being are paramount at all times.

Although unable to decide for themselves, most pupils eat the well prepared food provided for them. It is nutritious and well balanced. Most adults know what each individual pupil likes to eat and cajoles them with good humour and kindness into

finishing food and eating healthily. Adults eat alongside pupils and set examples of table manners and good hygiene.

Swimming and walking are becoming regular activities which most pupils enjoy. Regular walks through the woods are proving to be beneficial therapeutic work as well as keeping the pupils fitter; most love going outside the school for visits and extension work.

There is a satisfactory level of fire safety and first aid. The school keeps individual records of sanctions imposed, and a whole-school record so that it can monitor whether these decrease or increase. The school maintains a detailed admission register and monitors attendance; it fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has established suitable procedures, including a single central record for ensuring that, prior to taking up their responsibilities, all teaching and non-teaching staff are checked for their suitability to work with children and young people.

School's premises and accommodation

The good sized accommodation has 3 classrooms, a music therapy room, two soft play rooms for chilling out, a large activity room and extensive grounds and gardens which include a woodland walk. The school is currently developing a horticultural area so that pupils can learn to grow their own produce. There are good information and communication technology (ICT) facilities and a small training kitchen as well as a sensory room. The school makes good use of local facilities such as the library and community hall. Regular trips outside the school involve pupils in the community life. The suitable and specialist furniture enables pupils to work and socialise in comfortable and safe surroundings.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Information to parents is available through a school prospectus and can also be accessed through the school website. The prospectus, school policies and relevant paperwork such as the complaints procedures are available to parents if requested. The school provides parents with information regarding their individual child's progress through termly reports and regular review of their statement of special educational need. The local authorities placing pupils in the school are involved in reviews of their statements of special educational need and receive financial accounts of how the money is spent.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has full procedures in place for dealing with complaints. These are available on request and parents are made aware of them. Students can be accompanied by a key worker if they request it.

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:

- As already planned by the management, continue to develop the site to provide for more local physical education and fitness equipment and for the wider experience of scientific and technology subjects.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

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		√		
--	--	---	--	--

School details

Name of school	Kisimul School		
DCSF number	936/6593		
Unique reference number	135577		
Type of school	Independent special school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	15 May 2008		
Age range of pupils	8–19		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 8	Girls: 4	Total: 12
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 8	Girls: 4	Total: 12
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 83, 946		
Boarding fees	£ 138,190.68- £234,271.65		
Headteacher	Mrs Jean Gardner		
Proprietor	Kisimul Group PLC		
Reporting inspector	Linda Kelsey HMI		
Dates of inspection	10 June 2009		