

Roaches School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Trevor Watts
Social care inspector	Mark Ryder

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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, 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.^{1, 2}

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

Roaches School is a special school for young people, aged seven to 16 years, with extreme behavioural, social, emotional difficulties. When admitted, they have a history of temporary or permanent exclusion from school, or have been at risk of being excluded. They have low self-esteem and can be seriously withdrawn or isolated with very immature social skills. There are very small numbers of girls, pupils from minority ethnic heritages, and pupils who have additional moderate learning difficulties. About a third of the pupils are in the care of their local authority, and most have a statement of special educational needs.

The school aims to provide a balance of education, therapy, intensive support and stimulation in a secure environment so that the pupils can develop into mature young people who are capable of earning a living in a wider society. Pupils from local authorities across the country are referred to the school, and some become boarders in the two children's home which are on the school premises. Almost all day pupils are from the immediate locality. Currently, 37 pupils are on roll, with 15 boarding and 22 day pupils.

The school is located on three separate sites, up to 14 miles apart.

- The lower school site is for Key Stage 2 pupils and is located in a very isolated farm setting. There is a children's home attached which was not part of the school inspection.
- The main, or upper, site is for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4. It is in a town, in a Georgian residence. There is a newly opened annexe on the same campus, which houses new science facilities. The children's home on this site was the subject of an inspection at the same time as this inspection.

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

- An additional annexe is also in the town and it is used for specialist technology provision.

The school opened in 1998, was registered in March 2000 and was last inspected in February 2007. It has gained the Healthy School Award. The home attached to the upper school was last inspected in February 2010.

Evaluation of the school

Roaches School provides an outstanding quality of education for its pupils and meets its aims extremely effectively. The curriculum, teaching and assessment are outstanding, enabling pupils to be very highly motivated and to make outstanding progress during their time in the school. The provision for their welfare, health and safety, including safeguarding arrangements, is outstanding. The school meets all of the current regulatory requirements. The school has developed very strongly since the previous inspection under the dedicated guidance and leadership of the headteacher and other senior staff. The children's home provision on the upper school site is good.

Quality of education

When they are admitted to the school, pupils are often very withdrawn, or may have a tendency to extremely unsociable behaviour. With the outstanding teaching, assessment and curriculum, pupils begin to settle, become interested, attentive, highly motivated and focused on gaining skills, knowledge and qualifications to 'turn themselves around'. After a settling in period, they begin to make outstanding progress.

Teachers plan very thoroughly for pupils of differing abilities and interests. They have very good subject knowledge as well as knowledge of pupils' needs and a great sensitivity for their moods and behaviours. Based on accurate and regular assessment of pupils' progress, teachers plan their lessons to take account of the differing needs and abilities and interests of pupils. They ensure that the teaching, support and tasks are challenging and that they operate at a high pace. Teachers' behaviour management is carried out in a natural, low key, friendly manner, relying on their own confidence, enthusiasm and very high expectations. This creates great willingness and motivation so that pupils are keen to join in and get along together. They learn to play musical instruments, write stories, talk about their own feelings and experiences, climb rock faces, carry out scientific experiments, work out algebra problems and build models out of wood and metal. Some of these were 'garden furniture' such as nesting boxes and feeding tables that were donated to a local wildlife reserve. In each activity area they make outstanding progress, including those pupils who are less skilled than other pupils around them, and those in the

care of their local authority. Similarly, girls perform just as well as the boys, and so do pupils from ethnic minority heritages.

The curriculum has been expertly designed and adapted to meet pupils' needs. As well as a full spread of National Curriculum subjects, including French and German, pupils take part in many valuable therapy activities and outdoor pursuits that contribute effectively to pupils' learning and their personal development. These therapies include small group and individual activities such as learning to play several different musical instruments, or singing. Other worthwhile therapy experiences include art, anger management and social behaviour activities. Pupils go climbing, kayaking, mountain-biking or rambling on the moors. Older pupils have excellent opportunities to take part in work experience and college placements. All pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 have lessons in the technology workshops which have spacious and modern facilities for woodwork, metalwork, computer design and familiarisation with vehicle engines.

These all combine to ensure pupils' great chances of success in the future, both in work and in their personal lives. All pupils are entered for GCSE examinations. In summer 2010 all pupils gained five passes in English, mathematics, science, art and design and resistant materials. Several gained accreditation in information and communication technology (ICT). A minority of pupils gained Entry Level accreditation in several subjects, and certificates for independence skills through the Award Scheme Development and Assessment Network (ASDAN). Currently, pupils are making excellent progress in their studies in six different GCSE subjects and for BTEC sports and ICT accreditation.

Opportunities are created for boarding pupils to do their homework in school immediately after school. The school and home staff share ideas and some planning, although this tends to be informal, rather than in well-structured or systematic way. In activities such as in personal, social and health education and citizenship, visits out, and common rewards and sanctions teachers and care staff frequently plan together, and there are times when care staff effectively provide support in classrooms. In lessons, pupils are usually extremely well behaved, although outbursts do occur occasionally. They pay attention, put in a lot of effort and focus very well on their work. Older pupils are dedicated to getting their GCSE passes.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is good and their attendance is high. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils develop very strong self-confidence without becoming overly confident. They are polite and friendly; they enjoy their education. The teaching, staff role modelling and therapies help pupils to develop deep interests, such as in outdoor education, woodwork or kayaking. They help in the community, with a wildlife reserve, for example, or with the local horticultural project. They have good opportunities to help in school, such as through the school council, performing in twice-yearly concerts, litter-picking or helping in the school garden. To help to prepare them well for their future economic well-being, the school

provides opportunities such as work experience, college courses in practical subjects, classes in workshop practice, food preparation and how to live independently. Although they understand about right and wrong with regard to themselves, they do not always see how this might apply in wider circumstances. Similarly, they are well aware of the local culture, but the school has not implemented a structured programme to make them more aware of issues of tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions. In the boarding provision pupils develop social, personal and independent skills well, through, for instance, the many visits that are undertaken in the evenings and at weekends where they develop their social and leisure skills together. The many opportunities for pupils to mix socially in the evenings, the consistent application of the same system of rewards and sanctions as the school enable pupils to develop their social and moral values well. Frequent opportunities to help to prepare meals and keep their rooms tidy allow them to build up practical skills so that they can live more independently.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is outstanding. Pupils have outstanding knowledge about staying healthy and keeping safe and they put their convictions into practice. They take part safely in many physical activities, including some of an adventurous nature. They enjoy their school lunches. They say there is no bullying in school and are confident to talk to a member of staff if they have problems. All of the required policies and procedures are in place and up to date, including those for ensuring pupils' safeguarding. Staff are well-trained and know exactly what their responsibilities are in relation to health and safety matters. The school's improvement plan has been dominated by the planning for the new science and classrooms annexe, and this reflects the care taken over all of the health and safety aspects. Liaison with the residential staff over health, safety and welfare matters is excellent. The school fulfils its duties the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act 2001. Its three-year plan meets requirements.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school's procedures for ensuring that all staff are suitable people to work with children are fully compliant with all of the current regulations. All the required checks are made and a single central register is maintained.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school's premises are very different in character, but each is a secure, safe and suitable environment for learning. All of the requirements are met with regard to regulations such as fire safety, health, and building maintenance and repair. The workshop annexe is very spacious and has a wealth of large equipment, all safely secured and protected. The new science and class area is bright and newly fitted. Both the farm facility and the large Georgian building are set in spacious grounds where there is room for recreation. Good use is also made of external facilities such as lakes, rocky moors and leisure centres.

Provision of information

The school provides all of the required information to parents and carers as well as to local authorities and other parties with a legitimate interest. This includes details of financial costs in addition to information about pupils' personal and academic progress and the school's policy for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. It makes information available through its web site, newsletters, policies, prospectus and reports. All parents who returned the questionnaires were very positive about the school, although a very small number thought that some aspects of the information could be improved, such as about what resources might be available to pupils and families with special needs.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's complaints procedures and policies are secure and well understood by staff. There has been one formal complaint since the previous inspection, and this was dealt with in the correct formal manner.

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 proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1.

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:

- ensure that staff organise the shared activities between school and home in a more systematic and structured way
- plan for, and carry out, more activities that would give pupils a wider view of other cultures.

Inspection judgements

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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The quality of boarding provision

Effectiveness of boarding provision		✓		
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special School for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties		
Date school opened	2 November 1995		
Age range of pupils	7–16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 34	Girls: 3	Total: 37
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of boarders	Boys: 14	Girls: 1	Total: 15
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 31	Girls: 3	Total: 34
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 13	Girls: 0	Total: 13
Annual fees (day pupils)	£39,000		
Annual fees (boarders)	£135,000		
Headteacher	Matt Wilson		
Proprietor	Sean Fitzpatrick		