

# Little Acorns

Independent school progress monitoring inspection report

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DfE registration number	886/6085
Unique Reference Number (URN)	131810
URN for social care	SCO23651
Inspection number	365621
Inspection dates	21 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Best

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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.<sup>1,2</sup>

The inspection 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**

Little Acorns School opened in 1999, and is part of a small therapeutic community that specialises in working with boys and girls who have severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Most pupils have a statement of special educational needs related to these difficulties and some other identified learning difficulties. There are currently seven pupils attending the school. All of these are resident at the children's home adjacent to the school and are in the care of a local authority, who fund the placements. The school currently has pupils aged between eight and 13 years of age. At the time of the previous inspection in January 2010, it was reported that the proprietor was in the process of seeking approval from the Department for Education to extend the school's age range.

## **Context of the inspection**

The inspection in January 2010 identified a number of regulations that were not met. The school submitted an action plan to address these issues, which was evaluated in May 2010 and judged to be inadequate. The school submitted a revised action plan which, although needing improvement, was accepted as satisfactory in September 2010. This is the first monitoring visit to check the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan.

## **Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan**

The school has addressed most, but not all, of the shortcomings identified in the report of the inspection in January 2010.

At the time of the previous inspection in January 2010, the school's curriculum documentation had not been reviewed to take account of a pupil in Year 8 and that there was no scheme of work to ensure that work was not repeated unnecessarily. The school has put in place plans and schemes for Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9) and

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

drawn up a rolling programme to guide progression in pupils' learning. The report also noted that there were insufficient learning resources for Key Stage 3 pupils, particularly in science. The school has conducted an audit of its learning resources and rectified the shortcomings. The inspection in January 2010 found that the school did not fulfil all the requirements outlined in pupils' statements of special educational needs, particularly the provision of speech therapy. The school has put in place suitable monitoring procedures and ensured that the outcomes of annual statement reviews are now immediately reflected in the provision made for pupils. These requirements are now met.

At the time of the inspection in 2010, the school had neither carried out fire drills during the school day to ensure that pupils were familiar with evacuation procedures nor was it able to produce a satisfactory fire report. Since then, new fire alarm systems have been installed in the classroom blocks and fire drills are being carried out at different times. A fire safety inspection took place in October 2010 and the school has responded to the resulting recommendations. The requirements are now met.

During the inspection in January 2010, the school was unable to locate its admission register for scrutiny by inspectors. This was subsequently found and was available on this visit. The school's admission and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with requirements.

When the school was inspected in January 2010, the facilities for hand washing and hand drying were inadequate. The school has now provided suitable facilities in both the pupils' and staff toilets which meet requirements.

The inspection in January 2010 found that the school did not provide parents and carers (including prospective parents and carers) with a copy of its safeguarding children policy. The school has addressed this requirement by placing its safeguarding children policy on its website and sending paper copies to the parents or carers (as appropriate) of pupils currently attending the school.

At the time of the inspection in January 2010, the proprietor did not provide each local authority funding pupils at the school with the required annual account of income received and expenditure incurred for each pupil. Although the proprietor has a balance sheet available for the school and children's home, this does not provide the specific information required by the regulation. As a result, this requirement is still not met.

Although the school has a disability policy, it has not drawn up a three-year accessibility plan to fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. This requirement was highlighted in both the 2007 and 2010 inspection reports and remains unmet.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

As a result of this inspection, the school must take action to meet The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010<sup>3</sup> ('the Regulations'), as follows:

- where a pupil who is registered at the school is wholly or partly funded by the local authority, ensure that an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil is submitted to the local authority and on request to the Secretary of State (paragraph 24(1)(h))
- the school must fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made)

## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Special		
<b>Date school opened</b>	1999		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	8–13		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 6	Girls: 1	Total: 7
<b>Number of boarders</b>	Boys: 6	Girls: 1	Total: 7
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 6	Girls: 0	Total: 6
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 6	Girls: 1	Total: 7
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	£171,169		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lorraine Putt		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Choice Lifestyles		