

Sheiling School (Thornbury)

Independent school standard inspection report

DfE registration number	803/6000
Unique Reference Number (URN)	109353
URN for social care	SC003404
Inspection number	361328
Inspection dates	08-09 December 2010
Reporting inspector	James Henry
Social care inspector	Wilfried Maxfield

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No. 090070

© Crown copyright 2010



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}

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and the government of the quality and standard of the service provided.³

Information about the school

Sheiling School is a mixed day and residential school for pupils with severe learning difficulties aged from six to 19 years. The school provides education and care based on the Steiner Waldorf philosophy and is registered for 30 pupils. The school opened in 1952 and was registered with the Department for Education in 1963. There are currently 17 pupils on roll and all have statements of special educational needs and are funded by their local authorities. The school is situated near the small town of Thornbury in South Gloucestershire and is part of the Camphill Communities charity. The school aims to 'provide a therapeutic environment in which pupils make progress and are helped to overcome their particular difficulties and experience the joy of achievement.' The last education inspection took place in November 2007.

Evaluation of the school

Sheiling School provides a good standard of education for its pupils and successfully achieves its aim of providing a nurturing environment that meets their diverse needs. The curriculum and the quality of teaching and assessment are good, enabling pupils to make good progress. The provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is good, with safeguarding arrangements fully in place and meeting requirements. Due to the positive care and attitudes of staff, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their behaviour are good. The school has addressed those regulations not met at the last inspection. However, while the school meets the majority of regulations, there are a number, particularly relating to the provision of information for parents and carers, which are not met. The boarding provision is good and meets most, but not all, of the minimum standards for residential special schools as laid down in the Care Standards Act 2000.

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

³ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga_20000014_en_1

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. There is a broad and balanced range of subjects that are effectively linked together through the requirements of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. Schemes of work are well planned and used effectively throughout the school to ensure that there is continuity and progression in pupils' learning. A 'main lesson' each day is based on a planned theme such as the seasons of the year. Activities to develop pupil's communication, literacy and numeracy skills are included within the 'main lesson' and enhanced through the use of music and art. Where necessary, individual pupils are given a personalised curriculum to meet their specific needs and this individual approach is reflected in the care given in the residential provision. Teachers and support staff are very effective in encouraging pupils to be independent and to communicate their ideas and responses in lessons through using communication systems such as Signalong signing. This again is supported in the residential provision. For example, care staff encourage pupils to discuss their day, help pupils tidy up after meal times, and support boarding pupils to be responsible for the tidiness of their accommodation. As a result, all pupils have access to a curriculum that effectively promotes their learning.

The curriculum is enhanced by specialist teaching in weaving, cookery, pottery, estate work and woodwork. For example, pupils have opportunities to design and make their own scarves in weaving and build simple boats in woodwork. Pupils are also given opportunities to work on the Camphill community farm and grow their own food. Pupils in residential care often enjoy using their own time to work growing vegetables. The produce is used in preparing healthy meals for pupils in their houses. In addition pupils have eurythmy sessions (a form of rhythmical movements that links mind and body together to create a sense of well-being) and regular swimming and physical education lessons. These activities contribute to pupils' good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy.

The curriculum is effectively adapted to meet the individual needs of post-16 students. There are activities such as pottery and cooking in the bakery that develop students' practical skills. The school has good links with a local college and with local businesses to provide work experience opportunities, for example a mechanics' course training students how to repair motorbikes. There are also other opportunities for pupils and students to experience the world of work through working on the Camphill estate and farm. The last inspection identified the need to have students' work recognised through national accreditation awards. The school has made a satisfactory start towards this target but it has yet to be fully embedded in the curriculum.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. As a result, pupils make good progress. Due to the small numbers in the school and the very specific learning and personal needs of pupils, all staff know each pupil as an individual and work effectively to meet their needs. Relationships in the school are good. Lessons are well planned, with teachers evaluating how well they are meeting pupil's needs. Planned future lessons are often adapted on the basis of these evaluations to help

pupils take the next step in their learning. However, there are occasions, often with the best of intentions, when staff can take too long explaining a lesson, or take over a task given to a pupil, and this can slow pupils' learning. Individual education plans (IEPs) are in place for all pupils. These are accurately used to identify teaching objectives and provide activities that meet the learning needs of pupils according to ability and age. The care provided in the residential provision effectively contributes to meeting the social and emotional objectives identified in pupils' IEPs in order to further support their learning and personal development.

The school has a good framework in place for assessing pupils' work. This is based on the nationally recognised 'P-scales' which are used to assess pupils' achievements in English and mathematics before Level 1 in the National Curriculum. Assessments, both formal and through staff observations, are used to inform staff about pupils' levels and achievements and to plan for further learning. The school has just introduced a new information technology system to more effectively track pupils' progress. However, this is not yet fully established in informing staff about pupils' progress over time.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. The school has a strong non-denominational Christian ethos that promotes pupils' personal development by placing an emphasis on valuing each pupil and developing their self-confidence. This is shown through programmes such as the 'Nurture Nature Project' which offers individual therapeutic activities to develop pupils' social skills through collaboration and celebrating success. Pupils' social and moral development is effectively supported through a similar approach by staff in the residential setting, where pupils are valued as individuals and taught empathy for others. The few pupils who were able to complete questionnaires said that they enjoyed school and pupils' good attendance confirms this view. Regular assemblies and the celebration of different religious festivals, such as Diwali, through curriculum programmes, help to promote pupils' spiritual and cultural development. Pupils' understanding of British institutions is developed through practical activities such as visits to the local post office and library.

On occasions some pupils can display challenging behaviour, but, overall, behaviour is good due to the calm approach shown by staff, both in school and in the residential provision. As a result, pupils are polite, friendly and enjoy the company of others. This calm approach also helps foster pupils' good attitudes as shown by their willingness to contribute to their school and local community. They readily help keep the estate tidy, for example by clearing away leaves during autumn, or help with jobs around their houses. Pupils contribute to 'open days' and visit other local schools. During the inspection, pupils visited a local special school to take part in a 'Santa Lucia' festival. These types of activities, coupled with work experience opportunities and practical skills learned in the residential provision, help to promote pupils' self-esteem and, as far as possible, prepare them for the future.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school makes good provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils. Safeguarding policies and procedures are effectively in place with staff having undertaken appropriate child protection training. Health and safety and behaviour policies are implemented successfully. However the school does not keep a record of sanctions imposed on pupils in case of serious misbehaviour. Detailed risk assessments are carried out both in school and for off-site visits. Pupils are taught how to stay safe, particularly in visiting their local community. For example, they are given a good awareness of the dangers of traffic and have cycle proficiency training. Pupils are encouraged to be healthy through eating nutritious meals, having constant access to water and undertaking regular exercise. They are also given an opportunity to rest after lunch before returning to school. The school meets the requirements for fire safety. Electrical equipment and fire extinguishers are regularly checked and fire drills held on a regular basis.

The school has drawn up a three year plan so as to meet the requirements of the Disability and Discrimination Act (2002). This is an improvement since the last inspection.

There were some areas of concern identified in the boarding accommodation which the school should address. These are explained in the section on boarding provision below.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school carries out checks to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children. Recruitment and vetting procedures are in place and all staff, including those from overseas, have undergone the appropriate checks.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The school is situated on a very pleasant rural campus and has excellent facilities that include an indoor heated swimming pool, therapy rooms, a bakery, woodwork, pottery and weaving workshops, a gymnasium, a large hall and spacious classrooms. These facilities are well maintained and effectively used to promote pupils' enjoyment and to enrich their educational experience.

Provision of information

The school provides a satisfactory range of information for parents and carers. There is a prospectus and an information pack for parents, as well as regular newsletters. The very limited response from parents to the pre-inspection questionnaire was positive. However there are a number of regulations that are not met with regard to providing information for parents and others. These relate to providing details of the arrangements for discipline and exclusions, tackling of bullying, the safeguarding

policy, health and safety and the promotion of good behaviour, the complaints procedure, the contact details of the chair of governors and the number of staff employed at the school.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has policies and procedures in place that meet all but one of the regulations for dealing with complaints. This is due to the school not routinely making the complaints procedure available to parents. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The requirements for dealing with complaints laid down in the national minimum standards for boarding provision are fully met.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The care provision is judged to be good although national minimum standards are not fully met.

Pupils benefit from good boarding provision. Their health needs are met effectively by competent staff who have access to detailed health care plans. As a result, staff are able to provide good support to pupils with a wide range of complex learning, social and emotional needs. There is good consultation with parents to ensure that health needs are known before the start of a placement. Pupils benefit from an effective range of additional therapies and specialist medical services. Medication policies and procedures are implemented robustly. Records are accurate and well monitored.

Staff respect the pupils' need for privacy. They are sensitive to the needs of pupils with specific conditions who might need assistance with intimate personal care. Placement plans provide staff with good guidance and cover procedural advice on dealing with pupils' personal care issues. To ensure pupils' well-being, staff are effective and professional in sharing sensitive and confidential information. The school has a complaints policy and a written log is kept of all complaints. The management of the school has responded adequately to the concerns expressed in the period since the last inspection.

Pupils are protected by the school's safeguarding and child protection policies. Staff demonstrate a good awareness of safeguarding issues and this is supported by regular internal induction training. Managers have also undertaken child protection training at an appropriate level. The school has responded adequately to all child protection concerns in the period since it was last inspected.

Staff implement the anti-bullying policy effectively and, as a result, bullying is currently not a problem at the school. Measures to prevent children from going missing have been reviewed and staffing levels have been adjusted to provide the best possible supervision.

The school has invested in the provision of additional behaviour management training to provide for the needs of pupils with challenging behaviours. Behaviour management plans have greatly improved and provide staff with good guidance with regards to positive responses and non-violent physical intervention strategies. Staff follow the school's policy on permissible sanctions. However, the recording of incidents of physical intervention and sanctions is currently not in line with the requirements of the national minimum standards.

Positive steps are taken to keep the environment free from hazards and from the risk of fire. Emergency lighting, fire alarms and fire-fighting equipment are regularly tested and serviced. Evacuation procedures and fire drills are carried out at adequate intervals.

Pupils and students are protected from people unsuitable to work in a school environment. Recruitment and vetting procedures are good. Criminal Records Bureau checks at the highest level are in place. References, identity checks, a full employment history and the outcome and scoring of interviews are all in place. However, there is still inconsistent checking of references, gaps in applicants' employment histories and checks on proof of relevant qualifications.

Care staff actively support pupils' education. There is effective interaction with school staff to integrate school and boarding elements to provide a total learning environment. Pupils are given good individualised support to meet their needs. There is good consultation in reviews with parents and carers and outside agencies, and pupils are encouraged to participate and contribute if they are able. Pupils enjoy positive and sound relationships with staff based on mutual respect and understanding.

Admission and leaving processes are well managed. Pupils have their needs assessed effectively. The school has greatly improved its placement plans since the last inspection. Parents and carers are consulted on a range of areas including behaviour management plans.

The boarding houses are homely, well furnished and decorated and provide a comfortable environment. The school continues to renovate and modernise its premises.

There is a clear and comprehensive Statement of Purpose. Procedural guidance for care support staff and volunteers is good. Confidential records are kept securely. The boarding houses are staffed at a good level. A new duty roster system is in place to ensure pupils are well supervised and benefit from the continuity of good care. Members of staff are themselves well supported and trained. However, new staff do not receive the frequency of supervisions recommended in the national minimum standards. Current levels of staff with a recognised qualification are good. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. A competent and well-qualified

registered manager enjoys the support of an experienced senior management team.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.⁴

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- ensure that a record of sanctions imposed on pupils for serious misbehaviour is kept (paragraph 16).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- ensure that the information stated below is made available to parents, parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate:
 - the name and address for correspondence of the chairperson of governors (paragraph 24(1)(a))
 - particulars of the school's policy and arrangements for admissions, discipline and exclusions (paragraph 24(1)(b))
 - particulars of policies relating to bullying, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, and sanctions adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving as required under part 3 paragraph 9 (paragraph 24(1)(b))
 - particulars of the arrangements for tackling bullying, and for promoting pupils' health and safety on the school premises and on educational visits as required under part 3 paragraphs 10, 11 and 12 (paragraph 24(1)(b))
 - particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations (paragraph 24(1)(b))
 - details of the complaints procedure adopted by the school, together with details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 24(1)(b))

⁴ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made

- the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 24(1)(b)).
- publish on the school website or, where no such website exists, send to parents of pupils (and of prospective pupils on request) a copy of their safeguarding children policy as required under part 3, paragraph 7 (paragraph 24 (1)(c)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the manner in which complaints are to be handled (standards in part 7) and must:

- ensure the complaints procedure is made available to parents (paragraph 25(b)).

In order to meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools and associated regulations, the school should:

- ensure the recording of sanctions and physical interventions in a bound and numbered book (NMS 10)
- ensure that references, gaps in employment histories and qualifications are checked consistently (NMS 27)
- ensure that new staff receive one-to-one supervision at least fortnightly during the first two terms of their employment (NMS 30).

Inspection judgements

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		√		
--	--	---	--	--

The quality of boarding provision

Effectiveness of boarding provision		√		
-------------------------------------	--	---	--	--

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Day and residential school for pupils with severe learning difficulties		
Date school opened	1952		
Age range of pupils	6–19 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 12	Girls: 5	Total: 17
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of boarders	Boys: 5	Girls: 4	Total: 9
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 12	Girls: 5	Total: 17
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 5	Girls: 1	Total: 6
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 66,475		
Annual fees (boarders)	£ 87,278		
Address of school	Thornbury Park Park Road Thornbury Bristol BS35 1HP		
Telephone number	01454 412194		
Email address	mail@sheilingschool.org.uk		
Headteacher	Rikke Julin		
Proprietor	Camphill Communities Thornbury		