

# Chelfham Mill School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Steffi Penny HMI

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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.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## Information about the school

Chelfham Mill School is an independent, residential and day special school for pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. The school was registered in 1984. It provides education for up to 62 boys. Since the previous inspection the age range has been extended and is now from seven to 19 years. Ten places are available for day pupils. There are currently 33 pupils on roll, nine of whom are placed for 52 weeks of the year, 12 attend daily and the remainder are placed for 38 weeks. The school occupies two sites. The main site at Chelfham provides education for pupils aged seven to 16 years. The other site known as the 'Postscript' provides up to five residential places for young men aged between 16 and 19 years; currently three are on roll. These young men are not taught in the school and attend local colleges from between three to five days per week.

Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. Almost all pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Many have a history of severely disrupted schooling and home lives. Places are funded by pupils' local authorities, mostly from the south west of England. The school uses cognitive-behavioural therapy, including token reward systems, individual behaviour programmes and contracts; this is complemented by specific therapy provision involving psychotherapy, art therapy and behaviour management training. The school aims to enhance pupils' self-esteem and develop their capacity to accept responsibility for their behaviour and to learn how to make correct decisions.

The school has dual registration as a children's home. The inspection of the care provision was carried out at the same time as the education provision, which is reported on separately. The previous inspection of the education provision was in June 2009 when the school met all of the regulations for independent schools.

## Evaluation of the school

Chelfham Mill School meets its aims and provides a good quality of education. The school has acted well on the recommendations of the last inspection report. The curriculum, quality of assessment, and provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety are now all good. These, along with good teaching, now enable pupils to make at least good progress. As a result of good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

and cultural development, and good relationships between staff and pupils, behaviour is good. The school complies with all but one of the regulations for an independent school, including safeguarding arrangements that are secure.

## **Quality of education**

The overall quality of education provided by the school is good. The curriculum and other activities are highly effective in meeting the range of needs and interests of pupils. The full range of the National Curriculum areas of learning is followed, along with externally accredited courses that develop skills for learning, employment and life. There is also a wide range of different levels of accreditation to meet the needs of pupils. These include BTEC qualifications in vocational subjects, and skill-based courses. Where appropriate, pupils are also entered for GCSE courses including subjects such as mathematics and English. The careers advice and assistance given in helping pupils with planning for their future lives raises ambitions. Those that continue their studies in the Postscript participate in well-chosen courses in local colleges that they enjoy doing.

There are very strong links with a 24-hour curriculum for the pupils who board including homework support by boarding staff. Boarders have the added advantage, along with those pupils following land-based courses, to work on the allotment and help with the school's smallholding where pigs and chickens are kept. Good provision is made for citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE) within individual subjects during the school day, and evening time for those who board. Regular exploration of the south west of England provides all pupils with a good understanding of the local area and gives real-life examples to enhance learning that takes place in the classroom.

Overall, teaching and assessment are good. They are highly effective in meeting pupils' needs and interests so that pupils make good progress and achieve well. Weaknesses in the teaching and learning of English that were reported in the previous inspection have been remedied. The main strengths in teaching lie in the good relationships between adults and pupils and the good behaviour management which means that pupils behave well and learning in lessons is not disrupted. Overall, in all subjects all groups of pupils are equally well taught. Those with a statement of special educational needs do as well as their classmates because lessons and other provision, such as therapy sessions, are specifically targeted to support them and meet their individual needs. However, there was some variation in the quality of individual parts of the lessons seen during the inspection, where the progress that pupils made varied from satisfactory to outstanding. A key feature of where progress was outstanding was that pupils were consistently and frequently reminded of their targets and the next small steps in the learning to help meet those targets. Where progress was satisfactory not all staff had enough focus on the learning required to drive pupils' attainment. Also, although lessons are well planned and pupils are fully aware about what they are learning and why, some of the resources that were used by adults and pupils were not very stimulating or exciting.

Assessment procedures and the use of data on achievement, most notably over the last 18 months, to raise expectations of pupils' progress and attainment are highly effective. Tracking and formal recording by senior leaders has increased in frequency and accuracy. This now allows for a greater degree of challenge to staff and pupils where there is a slippage in not meeting the challenging targets set by the school. However, the school cannot fully celebrate the amount of progress that pupils make from their individual starting points when they join the school. Along with the sharpened benchmarking, the continued collation of data and finer measuring of the progress made in individual lessons will resolve this issue.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

The quality of provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. Pupils who spoke with the inspector said they enjoy coming to school for the first time in their lives. Attendance is good, and pupils come to school regularly. The school is very effective at boosting pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. Pupils new to the school steadily settle down and over time all pupils have positive attitudes to learning. There are good opportunities for pupils to gain an appreciation of their own and other cultures along with a knowledge and understanding of public institutions and services in England. Pupils make a positive contribution to their own and the local community, through looking after the school grounds and being involved with a local home for older people. They also make a good contribution to those less fortunate by raising money for various charities.

Overall, behaviour is good. Pupils make great improvements in managing their own behaviour from when they join the school. However, some behaviour is extremely challenging and requires adults to restrain pupils for their own and others' safety. The school manages these incidents effectively and through the timetable and class organisation minimises any possible disruption to pupils' learning. A significant and innovative practice is the 'Viaduct Games' (loosely based around the book *The Hunger Games*) where pupils earn tokens for good behaviour that can be exchanged for 'food, medicine, and tools' ready for combat at the regularly held school-based tournaments. Pupils told the inspector that they found this to be very exciting and inspiring.

Pupils told the inspector that they felt that they were asked their opinions about how to improve the school and that they felt listened to, with the school leaders agreeing to make sensible changes. The week prior to the inspection had anti-bullying as a focus. From what they had learned, and reflected upon, pupils said they would like to help the school leaders reduce any possible feelings of being bullied and reconsider ways of reparation. Senior leaders also said that they wanted pupils to be involved in looking at how to improve the school even further and welcomed this suggestion from the pupils.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

Provision for the overall welfare, health and safety of pupils is good. Safeguarding procedures are good and guidance is appropriately implemented. All staff have been

trained in child protection to the appropriate level. The adult to pupil ratio is high and all pupils are properly supervised.

Good procedures exist for the management of behaviour, including bullying, health and safety of the premises and for educational visits, first aid and fire safety. Guidance is suitably implemented and this ensures that all pupils are well cared for and are kept safe and secure. Suitable risk assessments are carried out for the premises, activities in school and for trips off site. External contractors regularly check the fire systems and electrical appliances.

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

The school has robust procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and others. All of the required checks on the suitability of staff have been appropriately undertaken. The single central register of these checks is complete and meets requirements.

### **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The school premises are appropriately organised to promote a good range of learning opportunities and to ensure the safety and security of pupils. There are specialist rooms and areas to support the subjects and courses followed. There are sufficient toilets, washrooms, and appropriate arrangements are made for any pupil who may become ill. The spacious and attractive grounds provide for a wide variety of recreational activities and areas that pupils maintain and improve for their own community. These include wooded areas, an allotment and a smallholding with pigs and chickens.

### **Provision of information**

The school provides all the required information about the aims and organisation of the school for parents, carers and others. Reports are provided to parents, carers and placing local authorities about the academic performance, progress and personal development of their children. The annual reviews of pupils' statements of special educational needs give detailed information to parents, carers and local authorities. Communication between the school and the external agencies that support pupils is effective. However, an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred is not provided to local authorities. The school plans to remedy this issue over the next week.

### **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The complaints policy meets all of the regulations.

## 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.<sup>3</sup>

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

- where a pupil who is registered at the school is wholly or partly funded by the local authority, submit an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil to the local authority (paragraph 24(1)(h))

## What the school could do to improve further

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

- Continue to improve the way that pupils' progress is measured and recorded from their starting points.
- Raise the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that in lessons:
  - pupils are consistently reminded of, and focus on, the next small steps in their learning
  - staff use modern, stimulating and interactive resources that better meet pupils' individual needs
  - all staff have a greater focus on pupils' learning and their individual learning targets.

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

## 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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## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent, residential and day		
<b>Type of school</b>	Special		
<b>Date school opened</b>	1984		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–19 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 33	Girls: 0	Total: 33
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of boarders</b>	Boys: 21	Girls: 0	Total: 21
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 32	Girls: 0	Total: 32
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 18	Girls: 0	Total: 18
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£43,137		
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	£81,000		
<b>Address of school</b>	Chelfham Barnstaple Devon EX32 7LA		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01271 850 448		
<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@chelfhammillschool.co.uk		
<b>Principal</b>	Mrs Katy Roberts		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Dr J Roger Burland and Mrs Katy Roberts		

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



30 November 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Chelfham Mill School, Devon, EX32 7LA**

I came to your school in November, to see how well you were learning and how well your school is supporting you. I visited some of your lessons and talked with some of you about your learning. I would like to say a huge thank you to all of you and the staff for making me feel so very welcome. This letter is to tell you what I found out. I judged that your school is good in every way, because:

- pupils are making good progress in their learning
- lessons are interesting and are well taught
- pupils pass exams that other people respect and know are hard to achieve
- provision for your welfare, health and safety is good
- your school measures correctly how well you are doing and what needs to be done to get even better.

Some of you told me that you would like to help school leaders to plan and work out how to reduce any possible feelings of being bullied and ways to sort things out if bullying happened. The adults who lead your school think this is a really good idea and they would really like you to help them make the school even better. I thought that behaviour was good overall. However, some of you need to remember what you have learned about how to behave safely, so that adults do not have to restrain anyone.

In order to help the school improve further I have suggested that the school should:

- continue to improve the way that your progress is measured and recorded
- help you to think about the next small steps in your learning when in lessons
- provide more stimulating resources and make better use of those already available, such as other adults, to help you learn even better and quicker.

I wish you all the best in the 'Viaduct Games' and in the future.

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny  
Her Majesty's Inspector