

Inspection report

More House School

Independent special school

DfES ref no: 936/6420

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 22 - 25 May 2006

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

More House School, originally founded over 60 years ago, is an independent residential and day special school for 258 boys aged between 9 and 18 years with specific learning difficulties and/or associated speech and language difficulties, 2 pupils attend part-time. 126 pupils have statements of special educational needs. There are 101 boarders who are resident on site. The residential accommodation is inspected by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), and the last inspection was on 22 November 2005. The school is a Catholic foundation, but is not closely affiliated with the diocese.

The school's aim is to meet the pupils' specific needs on an individual basis in order to enable them to access the widest possible curriculum and to maximise their potential.

The headteacher has been in post for thirteen years. The school is staffed by well-qualified teachers, therapists and boarding staff. The school supports the Graduate Teacher programme with a local university.

Summary of main findings

More House School is an excellent school. The quality of education, particularly the curriculum, is outstanding and it is equally well supported by its boarding provision. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is supported by teachers, boarding staff and governors in meeting the school's aims. Very good teaching ensures that high expectations are the norm and these are communicated effectively to the pupils and students. Provision for their specific learning needs and personal development is excellent and leads to pupils and students achieving very well. Staff, including boarding staff, have very good relationships with pupils and hold high expectations for their work and behaviour. The school has maintained the strengths identified by the last inspection and has made good improvement since then.

What the school does well:

- it enables the pupils to achieve very well;
- it provides very good teaching and conditions for learning supported by outstanding therapist input;
- it provides an excellent curriculum, enriched by many extra-curricular activities that are not solely for boarders;

- the staff work well as a multi-professional team;
- it has a high regard for the pupils' and students' personal development and self-esteem; and
- it provides very well for its boarders.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations:

The school meets all the statutory requirements.

Next Steps

Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following point for development:

- extend and formalise the procedures for the self-evaluation of whole school effectiveness.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is excellent. The policy gives a very clear overview of provision, and is supported by suitable schemes of work taken from national, age-appropriate guidance. All National Curriculum subjects, including a modern foreign language, are taught, as well as personal, social and health education (PSHE), citizenship, careers education and guidance, and religious education (RE). Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow accredited courses in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) appropriate to their needs and students in the sixth form study General Certificate of Education advanced levels. There is also provision for some sixth formers to re-take GCSE's in order to achieve higher grades.

Each subject is planned in detail for all age groups, and this forms an effective basis for teachers' lesson planning which takes account of pupils' prior learning and preferred learning styles. Suitable attention is paid to pupils' individual special educational needs as detailed in their statements and or records. This is just one good example of personalised learning informed by the school's extensive initial and on-going assessment of the pupils' prime needs in language and literacy. The team of therapists, based in the Learning Development Centre (LDC) makes an excellent contribution and ensures that pupils' access to the curriculum is maximised. A great emphasis is placed on developing pupils' reading, writing, speaking, listening and communication skills at all times, as this underpins improvements in both their educational and personal development. Where it is deemed necessary, pupils have additional support from therapists in the LDC. These sessions are closely monitored to ensure that pupils do not regularly miss other elements of their curriculum.

The curriculum for PSHE, citizenship and preparation for working life has a strong emphasis on guidance and knowledge of the world within and beyond school and prepares them well as they mature. The pupils' safety and health are promoted very effectively as is their future economic well-being. All pupils and students move on from the school to colleges of further or higher education and employment depending upon the most appropriate option. Pupils are strongly supported in making choices in Year 10 by the well-designed carousel of courses in Year 9. Good links are established with the Connexions service to support pupils' options and careers choices, although the school has some difficulty in obtaining parental support for work experience in term time.

The curriculum also has some additional high quality enhancements. At the end of every day, pupils undertake 'prep', which consists of doing homework set by teachers during the day. Boarding pupils have further opportunities to study and all pupils access an extensive range of extra-curricular activities including swimming, team games and the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Every Friday, the school operates 'Flexi-Friday' when all pupils and students focus upon one subject all day in year groups. This gives teachers and learners an opportunity to have an in-depth study of particular topics that are well planned and assessed.

Provision to support the curriculum for practical subjects is very good. Pupils and students have access to dedicated facilities for art, ceramics, music, design and technology, science, drama, physical education and information and communication technology (ICT). The outdoor facilities are extensive and give pupils excellent opportunities for sport, including swimming. Regular access to competitive sports and outdoor pursuits complement this enriched curriculum.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is very good, with examples of outstanding teaching in drama, swimming, mathematics and ICT. The high expectations, incisive assessment and excellent relationships ensure that pupils achieve very well and make very good progress toward their individual targets.

In 2005 47% of pupils achieved 5 or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C, and 78% achieved 5 or more GCSE passes A*-G 78%. 97% of pupils achieve at least one GSCE at grades A*-G. The improvement in pupils' achievement over time since arrival at the end of Key Stage 2 is excellent.

Teachers have a clear and well-informed understanding of the needs of their pupils. Basic skills are taught very well. The inspired developmental work on computerised assessment and diagnosis provides a pupil profile to be shared with all staff. This is a more recent development and is already having an impact on targeting teaching and learning because teachers are able to monitor targets immediately in a lesson and remind pupils about them.

Teachers and therapists have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Very good relationships and stimulating, well-structured strategies to build confidence help them to reach expectations and match or exceed their targets. Teachers modify the curriculum skilfully through their departmental handbooks and plan purposeful tasks to match pupils' needs. Effective analysis by the LDC of the way pupils learn best has been used by teachers to extend their teaching strategies to stimulate enthusiasm and challenge learners to want to succeed. In mathematics, a practical activity brought fractions to life and inspired a lively debate from Year 7 pupils which helped to consolidate their learning about every day use of simple and compound fractions.

Marking is encouraging and raises achievement because most teachers give good verbal and written comments, as well as return marked work swiftly so that marking has impact. Support staff and therapists make valuable contributions to lessons and help support individual pupils. Staff have a mission to make learning practical and fun so that pupils' life skills are enriched and academic achievement follows in the wake of confidence.

Behaviour management is an important aspect of the school's development. The parents and pupil pre-inspection questionnaires identified a minority of parents and pupils with negative views of difficult behaviour in some lessons. However, during the inspection the pupils' behaviour was excellent. The senior team take on parents' concerns and have introduced a positive *Behaviour for Learning Policy*.

In the best lessons teachers promote passion for their subject which inspires pupils to do their best and produce high quality work. The pace of lessons raises pupils' enjoyment and the purposeful planning captures their imagination. During the previous inspection in 2001 the teaching of cross-curricular ICT and mathematics were both areas for development. Teachers have integrated computers into their planning and now see ICT as a powerful tool for learning.

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership to all staff and has a positive influence on all aspects of teaching and learning and is instrumental in the quest for continued success. His monitoring is supported well by the senior management team. All subjects are managed effectively by teachers with good specialist knowledge and all identified issues from the last inspection have been addressed. However, there are some opportunities missed to formalise the review of departmental effectiveness and thereby enable whole school self-evaluation to be more evidence-based than at present. In a minority of lessons the use of audio visual aids did not have the expected impact and the plenary sessions led by teachers missed assessment opportunities. A structured pattern for homework extends learning very successfully.

The procedures for assessment are very good. Accurate assessments enable the staff to set effective targets. Individual education plans are relevant and track progress made, which leads to an effective annual review. Useful weekly evaluations of progress, through the pupil profile database, monitor pupils' targets. Feedback to tutors on targets has a positive impact on their discussion with pupils. Annual reviews accumulate all assessment evidence used to support discussions with pupils, parents, staff and local education authorities when appropriate.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school has continued to build on the strengths identified by the last inspection and makes excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is highly successful in increasing the self-esteem and self-confidence of pupils. The school has a Christian ethos and offers regular opportunities for collective worship. These assemblies, which include prayer, make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual development. The RE curriculum and some parts of the PSHE curriculum, help pupils to understand the religious beliefs and customs of other faith groups, including those of pupils and students. The regular access to year group mentors is also highly successful in increasing their self-esteem and self-confidence. The pupils have regular opportunities to access the school chaplain where they may find additional spiritual support and guidance.

The school has a very strong moral ethos. Pupils and students have a clear understanding of the school's expectations for day pupils and boarders alike. Rules are in written form, although they do not feature prominently around the school or in boarding accommodation. Whilst the school and boarding staff work very closely together, the reward systems are deliberately kept separate and provide prompt

feedback about the pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work and to others. Curricular activities such as the 'peace photography' project enabled the pupils to reflect upon wider moral issues as they affect the wider world. Pupils speak highly of the atmosphere in the school and in the boarding accommodation and feel that they and their property are secure. Concern for the well-being of others is a strong theme throughout the school. Fund-raising for their 'sister' school in Tanzania enables the pupils to consider others less fortunate than themselves. This is a well-established project of which the whole school community is aware. Other more local causes are supported, sometimes due to the pupils' own initiative, such as a cancer appeal.

The pupils have many opportunities to develop their social skills. Lunchtime is a very sociable occasion where they talk about the day and genuine friendships are evident. Pupils' behaviour in and out of lessons is excellent. The well-balanced curriculum is effective in facilitating pupils' social skills, such as discussing relationships in RE, mentoring sessions and life-skills education. They readily support each other and are invariably polite to staff and visitors alike. During the inspection, pupils would frequently enquire as to whether inspectors need directions to find a particular room. The school council affords good access for all pupils to express their views and influence the development of their school. All pupils get good verbal support and written guidance throughout their time at the school and especially when settling in.

The school provides well for the pupils' cultural development. The many aspects of art enable the pupils to develop a good appreciation of other cultures, such as those of Africa and Japan. They also study the work of famous artists and interpret them well in their work. Music and drama also enable the pupils to understand the importance of respect for cultures other than their own.

All parents surveyed agree that their children like the school and that they were helped to settle in, and the vast majority believe that behaviour is good. They also acknowledge the impact the school has on their children's all-round personal development. One parent praised the work of the school: *'My son's reading age was nearly 3 years below his age on arrival and within three years at the school, it was three years above! He would have failed had he stayed in mainstream education, but now has the same life chances as anyone else.'*

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school provides a safe and healthy environment for its pupils and their welfare is given the highest priority.

Policies and practice link into the Every Child Matters Agenda. For example, the schools' food service has used the recent relevant government priorities to ensure that the meals offer healthy options and appreciate the cultural and special dietary needs of some pupils. The school health and safety policy and practice has been rigorously reviewed and updated by the bursar, who has responsibility for all health

and safety issues. There is a clear health and safety policy, which lays out the responsibilities of staff and pupils. Records are kept meticulously. All school and boarding staff are aware of their responsibility for ensuring pupils' welfare, health and safety, and staff induction processes ensure that staff joining the school are fully informed and trained about health and safety procedures.

Policy documents overall are clear and precise and are reviewed annually. They cover areas such as child protection, anti-bullying behaviour, educational visits, and fire safety. The school seeks advice and clarification from external experts on all elements of health and safety, and any recommendations are implemented swiftly. The policies connected with health and safety meet the regulations fully and are available on request to all staff and parents.

Regular updated training for all staff ensures that the policies have a high profile in all planning and teaching. Two trained nurses monitor the 'Surgery' and also offer informal 'drop in' sessions. They are well supported by a range of fully trained First Aiders in the subject areas. Monitoring of essential equipment such as First Aid boxes and fire extinguishers is carried out by site staff under the direction of the bursar. All teaching staff have received training on the restraint policy and support staff know what action they must take.

The school rota ensures that staff are deployed appropriately throughout the day and evening to ensure the supervision of pupils, in the buildings or on outings. The school has a very positive approach to behaviour management. It has introduced the *Behaviour for Learning Policy*. Staff apply the process consistently which has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning. On the rare occasions when inappropriate behaviour occurs it is dealt with effectively.

Issues raised by the CSCI report of 2005 that link to pupils' well-being are being implemented to ensure the school meets the National Standards for Residential Special Schools. Risk assessment is very detailed and requires a response from all departments. All visits are fully risk-assessed; this includes the use of school transport for these trips. A regular evacuation of the site is used to test out procedures.

There is a well-maintained admission register that meets all statutory requirements and attendance registers are marked twice daily. The school management, including governors, have produced a four-year plan to match the Disability Discrimination Act 2002. The plan is well monitored and contains a record of tasks completed, but is not yet fully costed.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The proprietor has secure procedures for checking the identity, fitness, qualifications and employment history of school staff before they take up their appointment. Character references and professional references are also sought. Staff are

informed that their appointment depends on gaining enhanced clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau. Relevant documents and copies of evidence used for staff selection are stored securely in staff files.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The standard of the premises and accommodation is good. The premises are well maintained and there is a high standard of hygiene and cleanliness. The prudent planning of the management team, including the governors, has enabled the school to develop innovative accommodation within its budget over the past 13 years. The original Manor House has been thoughtfully developed to produce the good range of specialist accommodation and boarding facility which allows the school to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum to boys who are happy in the homely atmosphere offered by the boarding facility. Building plans have enabled departments to begin to be suited together therefore ensuring more efficient sharing of resources and equipment.

The site is picturesque and is designated an area of scenic interest which makes a very pertinent environment for science and art. Boarding was inspected by CSCI and recommendations have been accepted to improve the accommodation and staff training. However, the site is difficult for development and this has been a key constraint for managers. Site evacuation is completed to test procedures and the present population copes well with the movement around the site. A visit from Environmental Health in 2005 gave the school clearance on environmental health issues.

Classrooms are good flexible spaces and are improving as building continues. The rooms are a good size and do not compromise either health or safety. They allow effective teaching and learning and many teachers are starting to experiment with interactive whiteboards to further aid learning. The LDC copes well within limited space for small groups and one-to-one sessions.

Specialist rooms have been well designed within the constraints of space available, for example drama staff were pleased to have been part of the planning for the new performing arts space. This has already had a positive impact on the presentation of external examination work, assembly time and drama lessons. The sports hall and the new Simkins Performing Arts Centre have enhanced the wider curriculum offered by the school. The library is a well-used space with books and computers but book stocks are old and the area is less inviting than the rest of the school. The librarian and senior staff have identified this as an area for development.

There are sufficient washrooms for staff and pupils. This is an improvement and is an area planned for further development to offer a more personalized approach to washroom facilities. A medical area is available for pupils taken ill and this is also on the development plan for new build to meet the growing number of pupils attending the school. High quality food service in an attractive refectory setting ensures that

boys have a good family experience of eating together. Services to the site, including insulation, lighting, heating and ventilation, are maintained carefully by a skilled site team. All furniture and fittings are well chosen to meet needs and floor coverings in rooms are appropriate.

Outside play and sports spaces are strong features of the school. Extensive playing fields allow a good range of sports and events to take place such as sports day. The junior play space accommodates pupils well. These spaces are well supervised and ensure safe activities.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

The quality of information for parents and carers is good. Parental responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire were positive and indicated that they are pleased with the information they receive. The recently reviewed prospectus is attractive, easy to read and contains useful information about the school's philosophy and aims.

Parents have regular opportunities, both formal and informal, to meet with teachers and other staff about their children's progress. They receive termly written reports, as well as annual reviews of statements of special educational needs, which provide good information about pupils' personal development as well as their academic progress.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints

The school has satisfactory procedures for handling complaints. The recently revised policy is in the prospectus and is also available for viewing on the school's informative website.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	More House School
DfES Number:	936/6420
Type of school:	Special Residential and Day School
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	9 - 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Boys
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	258
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	2
Number of boarders:	101
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	126
Annual fees (day pupils):	£9,720 - £13,545
Annual fees (boarders):	£16,617 - £21,225
Address of school:	Moon Hill Frensham Farnham Surrey GU10 3AP
Telephone number:	01252 792303
Fax number:	01252 797601
Email address:	schooloffice@morehouseschool.co.uk
Headteacher:	Mr Barry Huggett
Proprietor:	Gard'ner Memorial Ltd trading as More House School
Reporting Inspector:	Mr Greg Sorrell
Date of inspection:	22 - 25 May 2006

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