

Rubicon

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	893/6026
Unique Reference Number	134000
Inspection number	316912
Inspection dates	18-19 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Patricia Potheary AI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 08456 404040

www.ofsted.gov.uk



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, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Rubicon is part of the Bryn Melyn Group of schools and care homes. Rubicon provides education for young people aged 11 to 18 who reside in the group's care homes. One of these care homes is adjacent to the school. The school was registered in March 2005. At the time of the inspection there were three boys on roll in Years 11 and 12, but one was on a long-term placement elsewhere. Only one student was present during the inspection. All students have emotional social and behavioural difficulties usually with additional learning difficulties.

Evaluation of the school

Rubicon provides a good quality of education for its students. It cares for them well, keeping them safe and helping them to overcome their reluctance to learn. The school places a strong and successful emphasis on therapeutic approaches to help students develop personally and academically. The school meets all the regulations.

Quality of education

This good quality of education is directed well by the headteacher who thoroughly monitors every aspect of the provision and the outcomes for students. As a result senior leaders have a good knowledge of the schools' strengths and areas for development, which are accurately detailed in the self-evaluation form. This enables them to continuously improve provision. This is recognised and appreciated by students and carers who feel that students enjoy their time at the school and make good progress.

The curriculum and other activities are good and meet well the range of needs and interests of students. As a result all students leave with a wide range of nationally recognised qualifications, which enable them to move on to college or work placements. The curriculum is broad ranging; there is for example very good provision for outdoor education, science, art, history and music and a strong and successful focus on literacy, numeracy and preparation for the world of work. A key strength of the curriculum is the flexible way it is adapted to meet individual needs so that students focus on areas of interest to them. The resulting good progress that they make changes their attitudes and they become keen to improve and do well.

Some very good work in art and design and technology for example has helped motivate students in this way.

There are some shortcomings in the curriculum, namely the fact that information and communication technology (ICT) and citizenship, which are taught within other subjects, are not planned systematically to ensure a sufficient breadth of study. Nevertheless students' work indicates that they make at least sound progress in these areas. A very close liaison with the care homes ensures that the curriculum is enriched effectively particularly by extending well beyond the school day in meeting individual needs. For example skills to increase independent living are developed well between the homes and school. Carers think highly of the overall provision in the school, but would like to see more homework set.

Teaching and assessment are good and meet the full range of students' needs. Almost all lessons are with one student and one teacher plus care staff support. This enables every lesson to be carefully planned to build on what has been learned before and is matched exactly to each student. Lesson activities are varied and interesting, with plenty of practical activity to help keep students motivated. For example the only student present cooked a banana cake, conducted a science experiment and undertook archery practice, alongside English and mathematics during the inspection.

Teachers are rather isolated in their ability to keep up to date with best practice in teaching and the range of strategies and resources they use have limitations. For example there are no interactive whiteboards, and, although some teachers do use similar programmes on computers, this is not universal. However this has been recognised by the school and closer links are being forged with other schools in the Bryn Melyn group.

Thorough assessment supports the good progress being made. Students' work is regularly assessed and their progress in each lesson is recorded. Progress is reviewed weekly and students' work is adapted accordingly. The initial assessment of students' abilities is very thorough and individual education plans include the targets and strategies which teachers use well when planning lessons. This means that students not only make good progress in their learning, but leave with a wide range of achievements including entry level certificates, unit awards, basic skills awards and, when possible, GCSEs. The headteacher has a good overview of the quality of teaching and ensures teachers receive regular training.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

The quality of provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their moral and social development is very good. One student for example is now able to cope with attending college despite agoraphobia. Students also have a very good knowledge of and increased respect for the law. Almost all students who have been young offenders do not go on to offend again after attending Rubicon.

Increased self-awareness leads to a measurable growth in self-control and students gradually stop reacting to provocation. Supporting personal growth in students is a major element of the work of the school and is an essential prerequisite to enable learning to take place. The school works very closely and effectively with a wide range of other agencies to support this work. There is a strong spiritual feeling to many lessons, particularly in outdoor education, where students have expressed wonder and excitement in finding fossils and crystals at the limestone quarries, or when picking bilberries or witnessing a tidal wave on the river. The development of students' multicultural awareness has improved since the school was first registered and is now satisfactory, although it still lacks thorough planning within the curriculum. Students do however learn to display a respect for the cultures and differences between people.

Students' behaviour is good. Their increasing enjoyment is demonstrated by greatly improved attitudes to their work once they start to make progress. This results in improved attendance, behaviour and pride in achievements. Behaviour is generally good in lessons, despite occasional difficulties experienced, especially when students are new. The school and carers indicate that students show very good support and are frequently kind and show caring behaviour towards one another.

Their increased confidence and improved behaviour enables students to contribute well to the school and wider community. Each year students set and review the school rules and are helpful to staff, showing consideration for their needs. There is good involvement in outside groups, including air cadets, sports teams, and local colleges. One student for example helps at a local dogs' home and another was involved in the local arts festival. This, alongside work related activities and improved social and basic skills, helps students to be well prepared for their futures.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

The overall welfare health and safety of students is good. The school takes good care of students who are supervised at all times. Close liaison with care staff from the homes, ensures that students' welfare is very well catered for. Students report feeling safe and think that any incidents of harassment or bullying are dealt with effectively. All required policies are in place and the headteacher is the designated child protection officer. All staff are fully aware of health and safety and child protection issues. Risk assessments are robust and fire drills regularly carried out. Attention to the health and safety issues in different lessons is very thorough and students are aware of these. The behaviour policy is clear and implemented effectively; all incidents, which are very few, are carefully recorded.

There is good attention paid to teaching students how to lead more healthy lives. No meals are taken on the premises although students learn how to cook good food and this is taught in food technology as well as personal and social education. There are very good arrangements for one day a week of outdoor education to encourage physical fitness.

The school meets all requirements in respect of the Disability Discrimination act. There have been several changes to make the building more accessible and it is fully accessible to those attending.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The Bryn Melyn Group makes all the required arrangements to ensure the suitability of the proprietor, directors and staff who work in the school.

School's premises and accommodation

The accommodation meets requirements so that students can learn effectively, safely and securely, but it is in need of some refurbishment. Some subjects are taught in rooms that are either very small, or for example, food technology is taught in a staff and student rest area. There are designated science, art, English, and design and technology rooms, which for the small number of students is adequate. Staff make the best use of the accommodation and arrange their rooms well with good displays and resources. The outside recreation spaces have hard surface and grassed areas but lack any permanent equipment, although students go home at lunchtime.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information for parents, carers and other interested people meets all requirements. The school prospectus is clear, up to date and helpful to parents and all the documentation is well organised. Contact with carers is regular and their views are sought and acted upon.

Procedures for handling complaints

There is a clear and suitable complaints procedure, which meets regulations and is drawn to the attention of parents and carers. No complaints have been received within the last year.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Plan more thoroughly within all subjects to be sure that students are learning the essential elements of ICT and citizenship.

- Raise staff awareness of current best practice in the use of teaching resources and strategies, such as the use of interactive whiteboards.
- Improve the accommodation to make the teaching and recreation areas more appropriate and inviting.

School details

Name of school	Rubicon		
DCSF number	8936026		
Unique reference number	134000		
Type of school	Special		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	22 nd November 2000		
Age range of students	11-19		
Gender of students	MI		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 3	Girls:	Total: 3
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 3	Girls:	Total: 3
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 3	Girls:	Total: 3
Annual fees (day students)	£ 23,400.00		
Address of school	Smallbrook Lodge Smallbrook Road Whitchurch Shropshire SY13 1BX		
Telephone number	01948661110		
Fax number	01948667246		
Email address	education@rubiconforyoungpeople.com		
Headteacher	Mr Ivan Phillips		
Proprietor	Mr Brendan McNutt		
Reporting inspector	Patricia Potheary AI		
Dates of inspection	18-19 October 2007		