

# Whitstone Head School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	134062
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cornwall
<b>Inspection number</b>	328815
<b>Inspection date</b>	11 December 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jeffery Plumb

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Boarding provision</b>	
<b>Social care URN</b>	
<b>Social care inspector</b>	Chris Passmore

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	10–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	19
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The proprietor Len Davies
<b>Headteacher</b>	David McLean-Thorne
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 June 2006
<b>School address</b>	Whitstone Holsworthy EX22 6TJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01288 341251
<b>Fax number</b>	01288 341207

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector and one social care inspector.

The additional inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school. He investigated the following issues:

Achievement and standards, pupils' personal development and well-being, teaching and learning, the curriculum, care, guidance and support and leadership and management.

There was a focus on the school's tracking system to verify the leadership team's judgement about pupil achievement over time.

There was a strong focus on what the school does to encourage pupils with mental health difficulties to adopt a safe lifestyle.

Careful consideration was given to what is meant by community cohesion and pupils' spiritual development in the context of pupils with mental health difficulties.

The inspector gathered evidence from lesson observations, examination of pupils' work, assessment data, interviews and documents. The inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This is a small residential special school which provides education for boys and girls who have emotional, behavioural, and social difficulties (EBSD). All pupils have diagnosed mental health needs. Pupils come from different parts of England and the majority occupy residential places. Boys very significantly outnumber girls. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above the national average. Almost all pupils are of White British origin and the home language of all pupils is English. Attainment on entry is below the national average, reflecting the gaps the majority of pupils have experienced in their education prior to being admitted to the school and their complex difficulties.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. Pupils enter it 'switched off' from learning and often feeling a deep sense of failure. The Principal and dedicated staff team work ceaselessly to remove the barriers to learning that pupils carry with them because of their emotional and mental health difficulties. Overall, they are overwhelmingly successful. They equip the vast majority of pupils with the confidence and skills they require to engage with learning. Almost all pupils are re-integrated into mainstream education when they leave through accessing further education courses which equip them for meaningful employment. A very strong working partnership between health and educational professionals supports pupils exceptionally well in overcoming their anxieties and fears, so that they begin to enjoy their lives and want to succeed.

Achievement is good. Pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and science. They reach broadly average standards. Excellent assessment procedures are in place to find out what pupils know and can do when they enter the school. During an intensive induction period, quality time is spent finding out what makes pupils tick. The information gained from this process is used very effectively to plan to raise pupils' achievement. The magical ingredient of pupil engagement is that each pupil has a personal education plan tailored to her or his needs.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. As pupils gain good self-esteem, they begin to enjoy learning. This is reflected in their excellent attendance. Their behaviour is very complex, because of the obsessions and anxieties associated with their emotional needs. Skilful behaviour management drawing on a wide range of suitable techniques results in the vast majority of pupils believing in their ability to learn. Overall, behaviour is good. The school strikes an excellent balance between promoting pupils' physical health and their emotional needs. They demonstrate their excellent awareness of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle through their enthusiasm for outdoor pursuits. Pupils have a say, twice daily, about their quality of education and are involved in setting targets to improve their behaviour and academic achievement on a regular basis. Pupils successfully adopt safe lifestyles because the school enables them to come to terms with their anxieties and to know their limitations. They make excellent gains in life skills as well as good progress in their academic studies. They learn how to budget and manage their finances through an accredited course of study and practical activities such as shopping. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils learn to cope very well with their emotional and mental health difficulties and this enables them to more effectively contribute to the life of the community around them. Pupils are encouraged to support others less fortunate than themselves and so gain a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens. They gain a good awareness of different cultures in Britain and in the wider world.

High quality care, guidance and support significantly benefits pupils. Child protection procedures are robust and meet government guidelines. Pupils say they all have access to adults whom they trust. Risk assessments, including of pupil behaviours, are thorough and detailed. Partnerships with business enable pupils to access high quality work experience placements which develop their work-related skills exceptionally well, and their careers guidance is excellent. They have outstanding therapy which helps them better understand their emotional difficulties and manage their anger. Tracking of their improvements in behaviour, development of social skills and gains in learning is meticulous. However, information about what pupils need to do to improve their learning in English and mathematics is not always used consistently in planning lessons to raise their achievement. Overall, however, the quality of teaching and learning is

good. Teaching flexibly matches pupils' learning styles and overall expectations are high. Pupils engage with learning because the activities they are given are interesting, relevant and challenging. The curriculum is good. It enables pupils to achieve national accreditation in important competencies which support them in accessing higher education courses. The provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is a particularly strong feature. Excellent use is made of the outdoor environment to engage pupils in projects which develop good collaborative teamworking skills. This outstanding achievement for pupils with emotional difficulties equips them very well to cope in the adult world.

Leadership and management are good. The dedicated staff team and governors share a vision and take decisive action to remove barriers to learning for vulnerable young people to enable them to develop fully as individuals who can contribute fully to the world around them. Overall, they succeed with this vision. The leadership team have a good knowledge of the strengths and the areas of provision in need of improvement. Planning for improvement is a strong feature. There are good procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, but they are not used consistently when conducting lesson observations. Consequently, the feedback to teachers on the strengths of their teaching and what they could do to improve is not always sufficiently robust. Improvement since the last inspection is good, as is the capacity for further improvement. The school provides good value for money.

## **Effectiveness of boarding provision**

### **Grade: 1**

The quality of boarding at Whitstone Head School is outstanding and the school meets all the key National Minimum Standards. Overall management and leadership of the school and boarding promote a strong sense of community within which pupils are valued, feel safe and are protected from harm. Clear policies, written guidance and development plans underpin the school's practice and motivates it towards improvement through reflective practice and self-evaluation. There is a clear line of management accountability and support systems for staff are robust. Since the last inspection, the administration offices have been relocated to adapted premises away from the main school building. A new mini-gym has been located in one of the vacated rooms and all pupils, both day pupils and boarders, can access it under the supervision of qualified staff. Other recommendations made regarding monitoring visits from members of the governing body have also been acted on.

The school promotes health and wellbeing and encourages healthy lifestyles. It offers a variety of activities, healthy food options and individual support to children with complex needs. The development of services for young people with mental health issues continues. The Principal is a qualified Child and Educational Psychologist and has qualified as a CAMHS (Children and Adolescents Mental Health) trainer and the school has developed exceptional partnerships with professional agencies. Together with the post of Health, Mental Health and Well-Being Support Officer within the school, pupils' general, emotional and mental health needs are extremely well provided for. All meals are cooked on site and are largely prepared from fresh ingredients. Pupils have a wide selection of menu choices throughout the week and there is a salad bar, and fresh fruit is always available. When discussing healthy lifestyles, pupils stated they enjoy the meals provided and particularly enjoy the range of outdoor activities offered.

Pupils stated they feel safe at the school and are able to share problems and seek advice from members of staff. Bullying is not tolerated in any form by the school and although there are incidents, pupils report that these are dealt with swiftly and fairly by the school. Key staff are appointed to child protection and safeguarding roles and have forged good links with the local

child protection teams and local safeguarding managers. Pupils stated that discipline is fair. Any sanctions applied are appropriate and do not get carried over. Staff are trained in approved physical intervention techniques by qualified trainers on a regular basis. In practice, staff are skilled at using de-escalation techniques, thereby minimising the need for physical restraint of pupils.

Boarders are able to maintain contact with their family and friends through the use of personal mobile phones and school phones available around the site. Pupils have a strong voice, with multiple opportunities to express their views on how the school operates boarding facilities and their views are both listened and responded to. Individual pupil achievement is recognised and celebrated by the whole school. Overall pupil behaviour at the school is good, pupils and staff are mutually respectful and staff understand the pupils and their needs. This enables them to respond appropriately to the diversity of needs presented by individual pupils. Boarding accommodation is of a good standard and provides pupils with comfortable accommodation. It is spread across the campus in a combination of external houses, providing some separation from school. Boarders have single rooms in the main or may share with one other. Bathroom and toilet facilities meet National Minimum Standards and give boarders privacy in use. A discreet routine of observation and monitoring of individuals operates in boarding without compromising boarders' privacy.

Levels of staffing are good and enable boarders to have individual attention. Most boarders go home at weekends but those who stay are well supervised and daily routines favour leisure activities and relaxation but still operate within the principles of the 24 hour curriculum. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The level of information sharing between staff groups caring for pupils during the school day and during boarding is excellent. Pupil achievement is celebrated regularly at assemblies and through notices and photo collages. Pupils have a real sense of community at Whitstone Head. They are valued and respond to nurturing and encouragement.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Use assessment data about pupils' performance consistently to inform lesson planning to raise their achievement in English and mathematics.
- Consistently and rigorously monitor the quality of teaching and learning and ensure teachers are given good feedback on how to improve their teaching in order to raise pupil achievement.

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## Annex A

**Inspection judgements**

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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<sup>1</sup>Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

16 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitstone Head School, Holsworthy EX22 6TJ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me as a visitor to your school. I enjoyed talking with you, and your interest in learning, particularly through exciting outdoor activities, and your desire to succeed and achieve well made a marked impression on me. The care in your school and in your boarding residences is excellent. You are taught well and make good gains in confidence and self-esteem, which in turn enables you to engage with learning. Your behaviour is good and your attendance is excellent. You are equipped with the skills you need to go to college when you leave school. Your work experience placements really support you exceptionally well.

Your school is good, with some outstanding features. The outdoor curriculum is excellent. You make good progress in English, mathematics and science. Your teachers and care staff help you be successful in adopting a healthy and safe lifestyle. They support you well to manage your fears, anxiety and anger. You develop into mature, independent and responsible citizens who care for others less fortunate than yourselves. Your principal and staff lead and manage your school well. Your residential care is outstanding. Your teachers and care staff work very hard to give you high quality education, which you rightly deserve.

I have asked your Principal to make just two improvements to benefit your education. I have asked him to make sure that all your teachers plan just a little better than at present and make sure that they use what they know about what you need to do to improve your work in every lesson they teach to raise your achievement, particularly in your English and mathematics lessons. I have also asked him to make sure that your lessons are observed regularly and that your teachers are given regular and good feedback about what they do well and a few tips about how they can teach you even better than they do at present.

I believe that with your help and support, your school can be even better than it is at present.

Yours faithfully

Jeffery Plumb Lead inspector