

# Chelfham Mill School

Independent Special School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	878/6024
Unique Reference Number	113591
Inspection number	333822
Inspection dates	16–17 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Dr Nigel Cromey-Hawke

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).

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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, 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.

This was a light touch educational inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

The residential provision was not inspected on this occasion.

## 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 for up to 45 boys aged from 8 to 16 years. Ten places are available for day pupils. There are currently 40 pupils on roll, 30 of whom are boarders. All but one has a statement of special educational needs. Their home authority funds all pupils. Prior to their admission all pupils have experienced considerable disruption to their education. The school uses cognitive-behavioural therapy, including token reward systems, individual behaviour programmes and contracts, complemented by specific therapy provision involving psychotherapy, art therapy and behaviour management training. There is a focus on the enhancement of self-esteem and the development of accepting responsibility for behaviour and making correct decisions.

It was last inspected in July 2006 when the school met all regulations. The last Social Care Inspection was in March 2009. Year 11 pupils were not on site during the inspection as they were involved in a leavers' programme.

## Evaluation of the school

Chelfham Mill School provides a satisfactory and improving quality of education. Pupils increasingly engage with their education due to the positive and productive relationships established with staff. Provision for their personal development is strong and, as a result, pupils show increasing maturity and generally good behaviour. Some make good progress in their learning but for the majority progress is satisfactory because of the variable quality of the teaching. The extended curriculum is good but the academic curriculum is satisfactory as the impact of recent changes have yet to be seen in improved progress. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, being hindered by staff absences. The school meets all of the independent school regulations.

## Quality of education

The overall quality of education is satisfactory, as the school itself judges. The extended curriculum is good, with many opportunities for pupils to engage in sporting and outdoor activities that take advantage of the school's rural setting and extensive grounds. This contributes to the pupils' good personal development, helping to build their confidence and providing them with good skills for later life. Friday activities are much enjoyed, where pupils are involved in projects that bring together different subjects in a practical way. These also sometimes involve upgrading the site facilities and resources.

The satisfactory academic curriculum has been under review since the last inspection. It is broad, balanced, highly inclusive and has a good focus upon key literacy and numeracy skills. There are clear policies and schemes of work that are largely based upon the National Curriculum, the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (COPE) programmes of study. Planning takes account of most pupils' needs and enables them to make at least satisfactory progress, but in some cases does not fully challenge them in their learning. There are clear pathways towards accreditation through the core subjects of English, information communication technology and science, with those in mathematics being particularly well developed. There are opportunities to study French and an extensive range of visits and visitors that broaden pupils' understanding of the world and contribute to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The BTEC Construction course is well established and there are plans for further vocational courses to start in September of this year. Resources have been upgraded in some areas but the use of interactive whiteboards in lessons is underdeveloped. The long-term absence of staff has meant that English groups have had to be amalgamated and subject specialists are sometimes not used. This impacts upon the quality of provision, especially in older year groups. The provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is good and links especially well with the 24 hour curriculum of the boarders. There is good guidance for pupils in moving on to the next stage in their education and a lifeskills programme is under development for older pupils. Many of the changes to the curriculum have yet to be embedded and it is too soon for any impact to be seen in improved pupil progress.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory as it was at the last inspection. Some teaching is good and there is evidence of outstanding teaching in physical education. In the best lessons positive relationships between pupils and their teachers and assistants result in a good working atmosphere. Pupils are provided with clear learning objectives and varied activities that lead them progressively towards them. Good pace is maintained and pupils enjoy the challenges presented to them. In these cases good and sometimes very good progress is made. The majority of teaching is satisfactory, lacking that pace, challenge and interest. The school has carried out some training in the use of assessment guidelines in lessons that help pupils understand what they have to do to produce a good piece of work.

This is underdeveloped in many cases and so opportunities to highlight and celebrate specific types and standards of work are missed. Pupils do not always understand in lessons what level they have achieved, or what they have to do to improve their work. As a result, independent learning is not promoted in some classes. Marking across the school is variable, with some good practice but little guidance in many cases on the next steps to be taken in moving learning forward.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning. Some make good progress. Progress in mathematics is good, especially with older pupils. In a small number of cases it is very good. Progress in other subjects is satisfactory, as the school recognises. Progress is closely linked to the quality of teaching and the ability of the teacher to stimulate interest and promote a climate of acceptable challenge. Progress is better in those classes that use success criteria more openly to help pupils understand how to complete work to a good standard. The whole-school tracking of academic progress is detailed but insufficiently frequent. It is also tied in to the dates of pupils' individual reviews which have widely different starting points. As a result, it does not clearly show pupil progress and attainment over each stage of their learning.

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

The personal development of pupils is good. The school places a high priority on developing pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Regular use of praise and encouragement, together with positive role modelling and consistent behaviour management results in pupils developing increasingly positive attitudes to learning. Pupils clearly enjoy school and behaviour and attendance are good as a result. They know the difference between right and wrong, value the token reward systems and are proud of the school community they are part of. They take responsibility for it through the school council and have initiated changes to some of its ways of working. They say they feel safe and valued by the staff. Good relationships exist between pupils and staff, irrespective of their age, gender, race or religion. The school works hard to support pupils with different faiths as well as promoting an awareness of cultural diversity through the excellent daily assemblies. Pupils know what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle, growing vegetables on the school allotment and monitoring the quality of canteen meals through their 'Food Group'. The strong family atmosphere promoted at mealtimes reflects pupils' growing social skills and emotional security. Cultural development is good, helped by the wide range of creative experiences provided for them and the many visits they make to theatres and places of historic interest. The school recognises the need to extend pupils' experiences of cultural diversity outside of school. The regular drama productions help build pupils' public confidence and showcase their maturity and talents. Parents are supportive of the way Chelfham Mill has brought about considerable progress in their children and helped them develop satisfactorily the personal qualities that will prepare them for life outside of school.

## Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Provision for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. The range of therapy work is extensive and helps the school manage the often complex social and emotional needs of its pupils. Detailed health and safety policies are in place which cover all aspects of the school's work. Child protection requirements are met and there are a multitude of trained first aiders, including two instructors, on the staff. Safe recruitment procedures are followed and all staff have been subject to clearance at an advanced level to ensure they are suitable to work with children. An appropriate single register is held to record such checks.

There are good procedures to assess key risks for each pupil and high levels of staffing to ensure that pupils are safe. The school works well with parents and other agencies to ensure that pupils are well looked after. Care plans are of a high quality and well monitored. Arrangements to promote good behaviour are effective and result in a largely calm environment for learning. Significant work has been undertaken since the last inspection in reducing the number of physical restraints for low level behaviour issues. These are well recorded and patterns evaluated through the use of a specialist software package. Fire drills are held regularly and both fire equipment and safety measures are regularly checked by a specialist company.

Pupils are encouraged and enabled to adopt healthy lifestyles through the nutritious food served and the well-organised mealtimes. There is a high awareness amongst the staff about potential bullying and good strategies in place for managing the low level of such incidents that occur. The school has a three year access plan in place to address the Disability Discrimination Act.

## 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:

- Develop existing assessment systems so that they more clearly show pupils make progress over each stage of their learning and track attainment more accurately.
- Improve the quality of teaching to that of the best, especially in the use of guidance in lessons that helps pupils know what level they are working at and what they have to do to make more progress in their learning.

## Inspection Judgement Recording Form

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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### The quality of boarding provision

Evaluation of boarding provision				
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## School details

Name of school	Chelfham Mill School
DCSF number	878/6024
Unique reference number	113591
Type of school	Special
Status	Independent
Date school opened	1984
Age range of pupils	9-16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 40
Number of boarders	Boys: 30
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 39
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 16
Annual fees (day pupils)	£29,361
Annual fees (boarders)	£53,775
Address of school	Chelfham Barnstaple Devon EX32 7LA
Telephone number	01271 850448
Fax number	01271 850235
Email address	katy@chelfhammillschool.co.uk
Headteacher	Mr Geoff Dunsmore
Proprietor	Dr J. Roger Burland and Mrs Katy Roberts
Reporting inspector	Dr Nigel Cromey-Hawke
Dates of inspection	16–17 June 2009