

Red Rose School

Independent school inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Honoree Gordon HMI

Age group: 5-16

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A¹ of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², the purpose of which is 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

Red Rose School provides education for students with specific learning difficulties, principally dyslexia and dyspraxia. Many students have other special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those on the autistic spectrum, behavioural and emotional needs. Most students have several different categories of need. Often students have been unhappy in other schools, failing to thrive there and are of a delicate or vulnerable nature. The headteacher is an educational psychologist.

The school is a Christian school. It aims to provide a learning environment where children can achieve their potential. The school's prospectus refers to 'eagles' who can soar above difficulties.

There are 47 students currently on roll, aged between 10 and 16, the majority of whom are boys. All but one of the current students have been placed at the school through a statement of special educational needs by two local authorities.

The school is located in a small seaside town near Blackpool. It opened in 1997.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of education is outstanding. The school provides an outstanding curriculum that is tailored to the needs of students with specific learning difficulties. Teaching and assessment are good. Students successfully regain confidence and self-esteem. They show excellent attitudes to learning and consequently make outstanding progress, as shown by rapid improvement in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Moreover, students really enjoy school. Provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is outstanding.

The school meets all but one of the regulations, but does not carry out suitable risk assessments on all aspects of school life. Procedures for safeguarding children meet current requirements. The school has made good improvement since its previous inspection in March 2007.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding and meets students' individual needs particularly well. There is an appropriate emphasis on developing students' basic skills in literacy and numeracy, organised in a way that builds up their self-esteem and allows the students to experience success in learning. Music, dance, drama, art and, to a certain extent, practical subjects play a large part in promoting students' confidence and enjoyment. Working together helps to further promote their social skills.

The curriculum has been enhanced since the previous inspection. The school now has dedicated resources and staffing for careers education; provision for learning about other religions and cultures is better; technology options have been extended to include textiles, design and technology and food technology; and the dance curriculum has been adjusted to reflect the interests of the young people, by introducing street dance. The international dimension is growing. The school has formal links with schools in three other European countries and is actively seeking accreditation from the British Council to recognise the value of these.

The curriculum follows the national frameworks for literacy and numeracy alongside the Association of Qualifications Alliance (AQA) units of work and the Adult Literacy and Numeracy scheme. These allow students to gain useful qualifications towards further study and employment. The curriculum for older students has some flexibility, for example, a few students follow GCSE courses in information and communication technology (ICT), geography or art, where they show aptitude. As yet, there are very few vocational elements. Much of the curriculum is designed to promote confidence. Students flourish in very small classes where help is tailored to their needs. Specifically targeted programmes help students with dyslexia or dyspraxia. Other input develops students' control over movement and motor skills.

The programmes for developing literacy and numeracy are very carefully structured, with small steps and plenty of reinforcement. The development of handwriting is a more prominent feature than at the time of the previous inspection. Students are very proud of this and several showed the inspector how much they, personally, had improved. Resources are good. These include a wide range of reading material that is accessible and interesting to this age group of students, who have low reading ages. The curriculum draws extensively on ICT programmes and interactive resources. Plans are well in hand to develop this 'virtual learning' further.

The range of opportunities for sport and physical education are rather limited. However, the school provides regular activities off-site such as swimming, with a specialist teacher, and circuit training AQA unit at a local sports centre. Students show good awareness of the importance of exercise as part of a healthy lifestyle.

Teaching and assessment are good. Teachers have strong expertise in teaching students with specific learning difficulties. A good number have undertaken further training and obtained qualifications for work with children with specific additional needs, or in child care. Close monitoring of students' progress means that work set is

appropriate to their needs. For example, students are set regular spellings to learn, and then tested. In lessons, students are given different tasks to do one-to-one or in twos and threes to practise teaching points. Students are encouraged to work things out for themselves, using dictionaries and other learning aids. They are taught techniques for how best to approach writing tasks, for example, to try a 'mind-map' for their ideas.

Team teachers assist in lessons, working with individual students. One-to-one support is provided for literacy for older students, when required. Team teachers take the opportunity to check and record how a student is doing, for example, in mastering a particular combination of letter sounds on a computer programme.

The school's records show that over time students make good and frequently outstanding progress. This is borne out by the majority of lessons seen during the inspection. The very small group sizes and the carefully tailored lessons to meet individual needs are the factors that underpin students' outstanding progress. Students make very good advances, often rapid in the first year or so after joining the school, in their reading ages and in numeracy. Progress in spelling is good, although slower, than for other basic skills. However, this is not surprising given the nature of students' difficulties. Overall, by the time they leave the school, students' progress has been outstanding.

All classrooms have an interactive whiteboard. Teachers use ICT very effectively in their lessons, as a means of capturing students' interest, but also to suit the students' different learning styles. This makes the teaching points clear and encourages individual work and practice of skills.

Lessons observed were generally good, with many strong features, but in a few the methods teachers used did not extend the students' learning sufficiently nor engage them as well as other lessons did. In this respect, though undoubtedly strong, teaching overall is not yet outstanding, as the school had felt in its self-assessment.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and a real strength of the school. The school's Christian character and ethos, which places a high value on every child and what he or she can do, underpin this success.

Relationships between teachers and students are excellent. As a result, students trust their teachers and are keen to learn. Students show great perseverance, knowing that they will be encouraged throughout in their efforts. They grow significantly in confidence and develop excellent attitudes to learning. The staff provide excellent role models: they build up trust, but in turn are prepared to be open with the students. A relaxed atmosphere prevails in lessons, with students able

to ask and answer questions freely. This promotes their engagement and enjoyment in learning. Students listen well, one to another.

Students' behaviour is outstanding. The considerable emphasis the school places on the development of basic skills helps the students to break down their barriers to progress. As they improve in these skills so, too, does their self-belief. As a result, students are more willing to attend school regularly than they have been in the past. Attendance is satisfactory.

Provision has improved since the previous inspection: through religious education lessons and daily assemblies based on a weekly theme, students now learn more about other religions and cultures. The school's involvement in international links adds to this growing awareness in a way that promotes understanding and tolerance. Students' contribution within their school community is good and is growing beyond this.

The programme for personal, social and health education, including citizenship, responds to many of the students' needs and helps to prepare them for adult life and the wider world.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is good and has improved since the previous inspection. The school has all the policies that should be in place to help safeguard students and these also go on the school's website. Students show good awareness of what makes for a healthy lifestyle.

The school has a comprehensive anti-bullying policy in place, should it be required. However, students were adamant that one of the reasons they liked the school so much was that they felt safe there and that there was no bullying. Students are closely supervised. The staff support and care for them well. The school has an effective policy, linked to incentives for effort and work, that promotes good behaviour.

Record keeping has improved; it is now more detailed, with most checks up to date. However, risk assessments are not completed for all subjects and activities where there is a potential risk of harm to students, nor for all trips out of school. Systems for approving and for reviewing risk assessments are too loose. The school complies with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has satisfactorily completed all the checks required on its staff and keeps a central single record of this. Recruitment procedures for new staff meet current requirements.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is housed in a large Victorian house. The premises are good, clean, tidy and well maintained. Classrooms are spacious, light and bright, mostly facing the sea. They provide a relaxing environment in which to learn, with soft colours and lots of students' work on display. Students have individual study areas (carrels) in their base classroom, with their targets and some learning aids to hand.

There are a number of specialist facilities, including a science laboratory, a music room with keyboards, an art room, a WI-FI room for the development of motor skills, a small hall for physical education and dining and several small rooms for one-to-one support work or counselling sessions.

The accommodation has been improved since the last inspection by the addition of a careers room, and enhancements to facilities for design and technology. These now include a textiles room and additional resources for 'hard' technology, working with wood and other resistant materials. There are plans to install a new ICT suite in spring 2010. Meanwhile, an air-conditioning unit has been provided in the existing ICT room so that there is adequate ventilation.

The playground is small, but adequate for the number of students on roll. There is easy access to the park and beach, and by minibus to local sports facilities.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides all the information that is required for parents, carers and others. There is a prospectus, containing information and several policies, a school website and a regular newsletter for parents.

As part of the annual review process, parents receive a report detailing the progress their child has made over the year in basic skills and in other subjects, together with information about their personal development.

Procedures for handling complaints

The procedures for handling complaints meet the regulations.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.³)

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- ensure that it has regard to all aspects of the DCSF guidance Health and Safety: responsibilities and powers (DCSF 0803/2001) by developing robust procedures and completing suitable risk assessments for all subjects, activities and aspects of school life, including visits out of school (paragraph 3(4)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- further develop the resources for ICT so that its use to promote learning can be extended
- explore further options for vocational and practical education.

³ www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm

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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School details

Name of school	Red Rose School		
DCSF number	888/6032		
Unique reference number	131163		
Type of school	Special School		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1997		
Age range of pupils	5-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 38	Girls:9	Total: 47
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 37	Girls: 9	Total:46
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,900		
Address of school	28-30 North Promenade St Anne's-on-Sea Lytham St Annes Lancashire FY8 2NQ		
Telephone number	01253 720570		
Fax number	01253 720570		
Email address	sourcelytham@yahoo.co.uk		
Headteacher	Dr Sionah Lannen		
Proprietor	Mr Colin Lannen, Dr Sionah Lannen		
Reporting inspector	Honoree Gordon HMI		
Dates of inspection	11-12 November 2009		