

Howard House

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number	929/6046
Unique Reference Number (URN)	132855
URN for registered social care	065312
Inspection number	344439
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Mohammad Ismail
Social care inspector	Stephen Graham

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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.

An inspection of the care provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the National Minimum Standards for children's homes. This inspection took place at the same time but the full report is published separately on Ofsted's website and should be read in conjunction with this report which covers the educational registration of the school.

Information about the school

Howard House is a special school and children's home. The school was registered in 2006 for six students aged eleven to sixteen years. The numbers permitted to be registered increased in 2009 from six to ten` students. There are currently six students on roll, two girls and four boys all of whom are looked after and placed by their local authorities. In previous years, most students in care were educated in other independent schools. More recently, the school has started offering full-time education on site. The school provides for students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties who have usually experienced severely disrupted education in the past. Three of the students have a statement of special educational needs. The school was inspected previously in May 2007 and the children's home in August 2009. This is the first joint inspection of the school and children's home. The school aims for its students to, 'receive a quality education founded on the National Curriculum and with a range of subjects which are tailored to the students' needs, the purpose of which is to raise the students' self-esteem and so maximise their potential.'

Evaluation of the school

The school's overall quality of education is satisfactory. The curriculum and teaching and assessment are satisfactory; as a result, students make satisfactory progress. The provision for care in the children's home is good. The school meets its aims and almost all of the requirements for safeguarding and child protection. The welfare, health and safety of the students are satisfactory. The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development satisfactorily which is reflected in their satisfactory behaviour. The school meets most of the regulations for independent schools.

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 overall quality of education and the curriculum are satisfactory. There is a curriculum policy which is effectively implemented through satisfactory schemes of work for all subjects in the National Curriculum. The school uses a suitable commercial programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE). Planning is appropriately adapted to meet the students' complex learning needs. Physical education is, however, only provided through one session per week. The school is modifying and improving its curriculum by introducing The Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) material. The requirements of students' statements of special educational needs are effectively taken into account. The staff in the children's home provide a variety of extra-curricular activities which engage students successfully but they are not sufficiently linked to the school's curriculum. These staff also arrange visits and outings to promote students' social development. The school has established a firm link with the Connexions service in providing careers advice. The school has helped some students to attend training, for example, in hairdressing, and work placements. The school, with the support from staff in the care provision, successfully helps students to become more independent.

The quality of teaching and assessment are satisfactory and students are making satisfactory progress. Teachers plan lessons termly according to the needs of each student's individual educational plan using information from assessments to plan suitable work which matches the students' learning needs and level of ability. Teachers constantly encourage and motivate students through the good use of praise to help them to maintain their concentration. Teachers effectively involve students in group work to help them to learn how to cooperate with each other. They maintain good relationships with the students who are given good opportunities to express themselves and share their views with each other. Teachers occasionally make good use of computers and other resources such as educational games to make learning more effective and interesting. For example, in a geography lesson, students were involved in using the internet and learning how to research different issues related to future job opportunities and education. In another lesson focused on English literature, students were involved in learning about local history during the Second World War. Both lessons inspired students and retained their attention. However, at times, teaching can be less interesting and involves students completing too many worksheets. Students acquire new skills according to their needs. Some have successfully managed to develop essential life skills which have enabled them to behave responsibly, to respect the law and to integrate back into the local community; others have moved on to various training courses.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

The quality of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and students' behaviour are satisfactory. The school's citizenship, religious education and PSHE lessons provide a secure basis for this provision. Students learn about their own and other cultures. For example, the school has established successful links with

a special school in Kenya and students are encouraged to sponsor children and to exchange information with students at this school. Also, students have recently completed a history project learning about slavery and about the life of Martin Luther King. There are plans in place to make visits to places of interest related to a range of cultures and religions. The school involves students in its decision-making process by seeking their opinions on different matters related to the running of the school. Students are helped effectively by both the education and care staff to build up their self-esteem and self-confidence. They are encouraged to relate more to the local community, for example, by playing at a nearby football club where they take part in training and coaching sessions. The school helps its students to respect the law and to become good citizens who will effectively make a good contribution in the society.

Attendance is very good. Students say that they enjoy their education. Students respect their teachers and the school which demonstrates that their attitudes towards learning have satisfactorily improved. The school works hard to improve students' behaviour and the students believe that their behaviour improves significantly during their time at the school. The school prepares students well for the next stage of their life by developing their basic skills and by providing different programmes through the Connexions service and local training providers. Students learn about budgeting, for example, about buying food, personal requisites and clothes which encourages them to live more independently.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

The provision for welfare, health and safety of students is satisfactory. The school makes all the required arrangements to ensure the health and safety of its students and staff. The school, through its teaching in science and PSHE, gives students good information so they understand the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse and of smoking. However, smoking remains an unresolved issue for some students although they are encouraged to stop through the school's support systems and the good role models of the staff. A healthy diet and opportunities for exercise are used to promote a healthy lifestyle. Safeguarding and safe recruitment policies are in place. All staff are trained in basic-level safeguarding and child protection procedures. The head teacher is the designated senior member of staff for child protection. He is booked for enhanced level training in May. Whilst a member of the care staff has enhanced level training, the school does not meet the regulation fully until the headteacher has been trained at the required level. An anti-bullying policy is in place and is implemented effectively. There is a risk assessment policy in place for visits which is administered jointly with the care section of the school. The behaviour policy is supported by a suitable system of sanctions and rewards. Health and safety risk assessments on the school building are carried out; appropriate records are maintained and issues are suitably addressed. Electrical equipment is checked regularly as required. There is a first aid policy and three members of staff in the education section are trained first-aiders. There is a fire risk assessment which has been recently re-approved by the local fire service. All staff are trained in fire safety procedures. The school maintains an admission register and an attendance register

which meet the regulations. The school does not fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act and does not have a plan to increase access for disabled people.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has undertaken all the required measures to ensure that its staff, proprietors and volunteers are suitable to work with children. There is a robust recruitment policy in place which is suitably enforced. The school maintains a single central register which meets the regulations.

School's premises and accommodation

The school building is a safe and effective place for learning. Students' education is carried out on the first floor of the premises with appropriate access to all the classrooms. It is well equipped with the required facilities and is well maintained. There are large gardens, with good access to sports and recreational facilities in the school's grounds.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school meets all requirements by providing the necessary information to parents, carers and others through an up-to-date prospectus. The school has an effective policy of reporting to parents, carers and others annually.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a complaints policy and procedures, which do not meet all of the regulations. The school's complaints procedure does not set out clear timescales for the management of the complaint nor how a copy of the findings and recommendations are to be sent to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. The complaints procedure does not state that written records are to be kept of all complaints indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage, or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing. It does not state that correspondence, statements and records of complaints are to be kept confidential. The school has taken steps to ensure that parents are aware of the school's complaints policy. No formal complaints have been registered during the past year.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The care provision was judged to be good and national minimum standards were met. A full report on the care provision is available on Ofsted's website and should be viewed in conjunction with this report.

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 students' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with DCSF guidance Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education (DCSF-04217-2006) (paragraph 3(2) (b)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of procedures for handling complaints (standard 7) and must:

- ensure that the complaints procedure sets out clear timescales for the management of a complaint (paragraph 7(c))
- ensure that the complaints procedure states that a copy of the panel's findings and recommendations are to be:
 - sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about
 - available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the headteacher (paragraph 7(i))
- ensure that the complaints procedure states that written records will be kept of all complaints indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage, or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing (paragraph (j))
- ensure that the complaints procedure states that correspondence, statements and records of complaints are kept confidential (paragraph 7(k)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.⁴

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

⁴ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/ukpga_19950050_en_1

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Provide at least two sessions of physical education each week.
- Establish links between extra-curricular activities and the different subject areas of the curriculum.

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 students			✓	
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of students' needs			✓	
How well students make progress in their learning			✓	

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development			✓	
The behaviour of students			✓	

Welfare, health and safety of students

The overall welfare, health and safety of students			✓	
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The quality of boarding provision *(leave blank if not applicable)*

Evaluation of boarding provision		✓		
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School details

Name of school	Howard House		
DCSF number	929/6046		
Unique reference number (URN)	132855		
Type of school	Special		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	July 2006		
Age range of students	11–16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 4	Girls: 2	Total: 6
Number of boarders	Boys: 4	Girls: 2	Total: 6
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 2	Girls: 1	Total: 3
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 4	Girls: 2	Total: 6
Annual fees (day students)	£28,160		
Annual fees (boarders)	£183,040		
Telephone number	01670 820320		
Fax number	01670 828433		
Email address	info@howardhousecare.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Peter Jones		
Proprietor	Mr Allan O'Neil		
Reporting inspector	Mohammad Ismail		
Dates of inspection	16–17 March 2010		