

# The Old School

## Independent Special School

Inspection report

---

DfES Registration Number	886/6086
Unique Reference Number	131862
Inspection number	301633
Inspection dates	11-12 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell 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).

---

---

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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.

## **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 Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## **Information about the school**

The Old School consists of two small schools situated in the Kent villages of Capel le Ferne and St Margaret's-at-Cliffe. It was originally founded in 1999 in the old village school at St Margaret's-at-Cliffe, near Dover, the second site was opened shortly afterwards at Capel. The school achieved registration in 2000. There are 28 pupils on roll and all but one have a statement of special educational needs relating to emotional, social and behavioural difficulties or other behavioural needs, including autistic spectrum and attention deficit. Just over half of the pupils are looked after. Both schools lie only a few minutes from the sea, close to Dover and Folkestone. The Old School has recently been acquired by the Acorn Care & Education Group, although up until April, 2007, the proprietor was the Morris Family Partnership. The St Margaret's Centre caters for Key Stage 4 and the Capel site for Key Stages 2 and 3. The school's stated purpose is to enable all pupils to reach their full academic potential alongside positive personal development in a caring, family atmosphere.

## **Evaluation of the school**

The Old School is a good school. It provides a good quality education where the pupils progress well in their learning as a result of effective teaching. The school is successful in enabling the pupils to improve their behaviour, which is good overall. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good. Parents, carers and local authorities hold positive views of what the school provides for their children. The attention given to the pupils' welfare health and safety is good. The school meets most regulations.

## **Quality of education**

The quality of education is good and is effective in meeting the school's aims. The curriculum is supported by appropriate schemes of work based on the National Curriculum and the requirements of the relevant examination boards. Following a review of the curriculum in the last year it has been improved by an increased provision of work related learning for older pupils. Accredited courses including GCSE's, entry level certificates in English, mathematics and science as well as art, physical education, basic computer skills (CLAIT) and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) courses prepare the pupils well for life after

school. Occasionally, provision is made for pupils to stay an extra year to enable them to gain improved grades and be as well prepared as possible to leave school.

The strong focus on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and increased attendance at school enables the pupils to make good progress in English and mathematics. In response to the pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs suitable emphasis is given to encouraging them to manage their own behaviour, gain self esteem and take pride in their achievements. The promotion of the pupils' economic well-being, enjoyment and achievement and an emphasis on the importance of working with others are firmly embedded in the school day. Extra-curricular activities are limited by daily transport requirements. However, the school makes satisfactory provision for competitive sport and an annual residential visit includes adventurous outdoor activities. The curriculum does not fully meet the requirements of some pupils' statements of special educational needs, for example, there is no provision for a modern foreign language at Key Stage 3, and there is no specialist support for pupils with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia.

The quality of teaching throughout the school is good. Staff know their pupils well, serve as excellent role models and are instrumental in ensuring strong relationships within the school community. They have a significant impact in supporting the pupils' academic and behavioural needs. Lessons are well planned and high expectations of pupils, coupled with high staffing ratios, ensure that good behaviour is the norm in lessons. When difficulties occur teachers and teaching assistants employ their experience and relevant training well to ensure that disruption to learning is kept to a minimum. Teachers work well with available resources which are adequate for most subjects. However, there are limited resources for the teaching of practical experimentation to support learning in science, and in information and communication technology (ICT), the computers are often unreliable and there are too few software programs.

The teachers' assessment of individual pupils is good. This information assists in the development of personal learning programmes and pupils are sometimes placed in groups according to ability. Independent moderation of pupils' work is well established within accredited programmes but assessment procedures in Key Stages 2 and 3 are not moderated by anyone other than school staff.

Self-evaluation for many aspects of the school's performance is good. Monitoring of classroom practice by school managers gives them a good overview of the quality of teaching and learning and this will shortly be revised in line with arrangements developed by the new proprietor. Parents, pupils and referring local authorities are regularly surveyed for their views on the school's performance. However, the systematic evaluation of whole-school academic achievement and target setting is underdeveloped.

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

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The pupils respond very well to the provision of regular opportunities to reflect on their behaviour, achievements and their attitudes to learning and other people. Their personal development is good and improvements are evident in most pupils' behaviour, attendance and academic achievement.

Pupils are welcoming to visitors and show good attitudes to study. All pupils are encouraged to consider themselves as responsible for their own behaviour and their impact on others. The vast majority of pupils respond positively to the school's merit system, which recognises and rewards positive attitudes to learning and to others. When, on occasions, difficulties arise in class, pupils often ignore unsatisfactory behaviour and carry on their work while staff deal with matters. Although many pupils find relationships difficult, they relate well to staff and respond well to their peers with praise and appreciation of others' work, for example, with warm applause when certificates of achievement are issued in assembly.

Pupils have good opportunities to contribute to the school community through a range of posts of responsibility. They have very good contact with the local community as a result of several well-planned visits and strong links with the local residences for the elderly and a children's hospice. As well as raising significant sums of money for this good cause, they also contribute to other national appeals. Through this they develop a strong sense of their own worth and understand that they can make worthwhile contributions for the benefit of others. Through the curriculum they learn to understand the moral issues related to caring for the environment for the protection of future generations. The accreditation of many of these activities assists their future economic well-being.

The pupils have developed a good understanding of their own culture and that of others. Regular assemblies, acts of worship and lessons in citizenship, which include visits from representatives of public service bodies, provide them with an appreciation of society and their role within it.

## **Welfare, health and safety of the pupils**

The provision for the pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. The small numbers in each class and the regard for their individual needs ensures that the pupils receive good levels of attention and supervision from staff. The school maintains very effective working relationships with external agencies to ensure the health and well-being of its pupils.

The school's policies, some of which have been subject to recent revision, are effective in promoting the pupils' health, safety and welfare on both sites and whilst on visits to the community. The supervision of pupils in school is appropriate at all times and trips out of school are supported by a comprehensive written policy.

Arrangements for child protection are good and pupils indicate that they feel confident to talk to staff if they have problems. The school's policies for the promotion of good behaviour and administering first aid are also good. Accidents and incidents are recorded in detail.

Routine attention to health and safety is satisfactory. During the inspection, a small number of minor health and safety issues were brought to the proprietor's attention. Systematic checks on portable electrical equipment were completed recently. Both sites conduct regular fire drills and have had undertaken reviews in relation to fire safety. However, the school has not effectively recorded their response to the fire officer's last written report and now require an up to date evaluation from the fire authority to ensure all risks have been properly assessed and addressed.

Registers of attendance are maintained regularly and the school's recent attention to its admissions register has ensured that it now contains all the required information. The school has drawn up an appropriate three-year-plan to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

### **Suitability of the proprietor and staff**

The proprietor has established appropriate safeguards to ensure that pupils do not encounter unsuitable adults. Staffing and recruitment procedures are appropriately informed by the most recent guidance.

### **School's premises and accommodation**

The school's premises and accommodation are adequate. The two sites offer a suitable number of classrooms and teaching areas for the numbers on roll.

The classrooms are of appropriate size for the small groups and small assembly areas offer suitable space for all pupils to meet together. Teachers and teaching assistants make good use of all available space and the walls are used especially well for display of pupils' achievements and other useful information. There is no specialist accommodation for subjects such as science or ICT.

Both sites have some ageing temporary accommodation that the proprietor has identified for improvement or replacement. The number of washrooms is close to the minimum requirements and neither has suitable facilities for pupils who fall ill during the day. Some soft furniture on both sites, particularly in assembly areas, requires repair or replacement.

The outdoor play areas are adequate. In support of the curriculum good use is made of local community sports centres for team games. Occasionally, the school has access to water-based sports as a result of good relationships with a local benefactor. The premises are generally well maintained and in satisfactory decorative

order. The shared use of the St Margaret's site by the local library is well managed and has no adverse impact on the pupils' education and welfare.

## **Provision of information for parents, carers and others**

The provision of information is good as a result of recent improvements and meets all but one requirement. The school maintains good contact with parents and carers by regular telephone calls, newsletters, progress meetings and the use of 'home-school message books'. Annual written progress reports are generally good but some say too little about pupils' academic targets and there is no space for parents or pupils to comment. These provisions are much better in the reviews related to the pupils' statements of special needs and for those who are in care.

The school's attractive website is a source of useful information and work is underway to ensure that it provides similar information to that contained in the recently revised prospectus. All parents and carers who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that they are satisfied with the information they receive from the school. The school routinely seeks their views about its effectiveness and uses the feedback well to improve its work further. Representatives from local authorities who place pupils at the school are similarly content, although they do not yet receive an annual account of how their funding for pupils has been spent as is required.

## **Procedures for handling complaints**

The school's recently revised complaints policy and procedures for handling complaints are satisfactory.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- ensure the curriculum fulfils the requirements of pupils' statement of special educational need (paragraph 1(2)(e))
- provide classroom resources of an adequate quality, quantity and range (paragraph 1(3)(f)).

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

- ensure the school has a satisfactory level of fire safety, identified by its risk assessment under the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997, and by a report from the Fire Authority (paragraph 3 (5)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- submit to the local authority an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of each pupil who is registered at the school and is wholly or partly funded by that local authority and on request to the Secretary of State. (paragraph 6 (7)).

## School details

Name of school	The Old School	
DfES number	886/6086	
Unique reference number	131862	
Type of school	Independent Special	
Status	Independent	
Date school opened	1999	
Age range of pupils	9 - 17	
Gender of pupils	Boys	
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 28	Total: 28
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 27	Total: 27
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 16	Total: 16
Annual fees (day pupils)	£23,845	
Address of school	The Capel Centre Capel Street Capel Le Ferne Folkestone CT18 7EY	
Telephone number	01303 251116	
Fax number	01303 251116	
Email address	headteacher@the-old-school.org	
Headteacher	Mr Martyn Jordan	
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education	
Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell AI	
Dates of inspection	11-12 July 2007	