

Philpots Manor School

Independent special school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Anne Duffy HMI
Social care inspector	Gaynor Moorey

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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, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents and carers, the public, local authorities and the government of the quality and standard of the service provided.³

Information about the school

Philpots Manor School, which opened in 1956, is a co-educational residential special school for up to 60 students aged from seven to 19 years. Situated on the edge of West Hoathly, West Sussex, it follows the social and educational principles of Rudolf Steiner. The aim of the school is that each student develops physically, emotionally, academically, spiritually and socially to the highest degrees of which they are able.

At the time of the inspection, there were 44 students at the school, with boys outnumbering girls by three to one. All but one of the students have a statement of special educational needs and approximately three quarters are boarders. Many students have had previous negative experiences of school, including sustained periods of non-attendance. All have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and many also have specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The last inspection of the school's education provision was in December 2006; the boarding provision was last inspected in November 2009.

Evaluation of the School

Philpots Manor School meets its aim and provides a good quality of education. Curricular provision is outstanding and meets the needs of its students exceptionally well. As a result of good teaching and assessment, students are increasingly well motivated and make good progress overall. Students' behaviour is satisfactory, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school has addressed effectively the small number of unmet regulations which were identified in the last inspection and almost all of the unmet national minimum standards identified in the last inspection of boarding. It now meets nearly all of the regulations for

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

³ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga_20000014_en_1

independent schools; it meets the large majority of the national minimum standards for residential special schools. The ethos of the school is reflected in the family atmosphere and generally good relationships between and amongst students and staff. However, insufficiently careful adherence to procedures, particularly with regard to safeguarding and child protection, means that arrangements to promote the welfare, health and safety of students, and the overall effectiveness of the boarding provision, are inadequate.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding and provides students with excellent opportunities to prepare for the next stage of their education. Based on Steiner Waldorf principles in the lower school, it is developed extremely well to cater for the needs and interests of the older students, many of whom attend individually planned college courses. Each student is entered for Entry Level and/or GCSE English, mathematics and science as they are ready for them; older students also take Entry Level art. The school offers GCSE chemistry, information and communication technology (ICT), Russian, German and business studies on an individual basis according to the choice and ability of the students. Work in stable management and riding, creative arts and textiles, gardening, modern foreign languages, life skills, and other subjects is accredited by the National Open College Network. Since the last inspection, there has been an increase in the number of students attending part-time or full-time courses at local colleges while still boarding at and attending the school. Courses chosen typically have a vocational slant and include painting and decorating, carpentry, motor maintenance and hairdressing. More recently, media studies, ICT and modern foreign languages have extended this range. As one teacher rightly said, 'Our students don't think it will be someone else who will be taking GCSEs or going to college any more.' The curriculum is underpinned by excellent opportunities to prepare for adult life which are provided by the boarding arrangements and good support for those students who benefit from the additional therapies on offer.

Students are provided with a good foundation for success in their GCSE, Entry Level or vocational courses. They make good progress overall, with outstanding success in some cases. There is good provision for sport, both on and off-site, and students have ample opportunities to find an aspect of creative education in which they can excel. The quality of practical work in this creative area is very high. The school's grounds and stables provide an avenue for both educational and emotional progress for students with a high level of need. One student summed up the benefits of this: 'I like it because it is a school, you get what you need to get done as well as do things like work with the horses. I don't want to leave school with no qualifications.'

The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall. Teachers organise lessons well and their strong subject knowledge, underpinned by an understanding of the particular ethos of the school, has a positive impact on students' progress and attitudes to learning. For example, one girl surprised herself by saying 'I want to carry on doing my maths – I never thought I'd say that!' Expectations are high and

teachers and students share a determination to succeed. Where learning is occasionally less successful, lessons are not sufficiently tailored to the individual levels of each student and behaviour begins to deteriorate. However, evident understanding of the emotional needs of each student generally addresses this very quickly. Teaching assistants work well within the teaching team and are most effective when they participate actively, providing positive models of good learning behaviour. Effective support is provided outside lessons and boarding staff place an appropriate emphasis upon ensuring that academic work is given suitable priority in students' busy evenings.

The school tracks the progress of each student well on an individual basis, in both school and boarding, and reviews students' progress very thoroughly with regard to their statements of special educational needs. However, this information is not used as well as it could be to monitor the impact of the school's work as a whole and to ensure that any differences in progress are analysed and action taken to address inconsistencies. Nevertheless, the school can point to a number of examples where students who have previously found learning difficult have moved on successfully to further or higher education.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. A range of activities both in and out of school provides good opportunities for students to develop self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. There is a strong sense of community and students' spiritual development is enhanced by the ethos of the school. As a result, they learn to distinguish between right and wrong and begin to demonstrate respect for other people's beliefs and values. Some students make tremendous strides in improving their behaviour. However, for a few, their experience of life at the school and in boarding is affected either by their own negative feelings or those of others, and the number of exclusions has increased over the past year. Behaviour overall is satisfactory. Most, but not all, students enjoy school and attend regularly. A few students have poor attendance; despite concerted effort, and often due to circumstances beyond the school's control, attempts to re-engage these students are not consistently effective. However, a move into boarding often supports increased stability and ensures more regular attendance.

Through themes explored in the 'Main Lesson', students learn about other cultures as well as their own and this supports an atmosphere of racial harmony. Students' understanding of those with other backgrounds or experiences is further enhanced by the school's celebration of the wide range of languages spoken by the staff as well as a few of the students. Good development of key skills such as numeracy, literacy and ICT, as well as cookery and other life skills, supports students' preparation for adult life well. A wide variety of work placements attended by students throughout the year include those at garages, hairdressers, local farms, veterinary centres, leisure centres and ICT companies. Coupled with visits to local libraries and other institutions, these help students to understand the world of work

as well as gain an appreciation of public services. Opportunities to grow produce, care for livestock and make things for their houses encourage students' contributions to their community and provide further work-related experiences. Taking part in the village's tidy up day and the planting of bulbs in the autumn enhances their contribution to the local community.

Regular house meetings allow students to express their views about boarding but students' responses during the inspection showed that they would like more opportunities to tell staff what they think about school. This was a suggested area for improvement at the last inspection.

Welfare, health and safety of students

The overall quality of the provision for welfare, health and safety of the students is inadequate. All staff are committed to enabling students to have a safe and productive stay at the school. However, procedures are not rigorous enough to ensure that this will undoubtedly be the case. As a result, the well-being of students, particularly in boarding, has not been consistently safeguarded.

Some arrangements, such as those for first aid and emergencies, are sound, and regular fire checks and practices take place. There is a good balance of enjoyable, healthy and nutritious food at mealtimes. This generally helps students to build up a positive approach to healthy eating, although some expressed dissatisfaction at what is provided. The extensive grounds and a range of off-site activities promote active lifestyles effectively. Students are aware of the guidance they receive about other aspects of safe and healthy living but not all demonstrate that they are able to put this into practice with regard to their own behaviours. The school has an appropriate plan in relation to its responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended, showing how it intends to improve facilities for adults and students with disabilities.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school checks all staff to ensure their suitability to work with children and maintains the required single central register. Residential co-workers from other countries who receive training at the school are also appropriately included on the register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The premises generally provide an appropriate environment for learning and living. There are, however, some inadequate security arrangements. Classrooms are of a reasonable size and specialist teaching areas for vocational and creative subjects are used well. The large gardens provide an extensive area in which students can study horticulture and the stables offer a well-maintained and popular resource.

The school has had a programme of renovation of the buildings and facilities in the past two years and has improved many facilities. Shortage of space for science currently means that practical scientific activity is rather cramped. However, there is a schedule of improvement and repair of the physical aspects of the estate and the school rightly has plans to extend the facilities for science when funding becomes available.

Provision of information

The school provides accurate and up-to-date information in its prospectus and on its website. The reporting system, which includes annual reviews and reviews for children who are looked after, helps parents, carers and local authorities to be informed about students' progress. The majority of parents or carers who had responded to the questionnaire by the end of the inspection agreed with the views of placing authorities that the school generally meets the needs of students well.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

Procedures for dealing with complaints are available and are compliant with the regulations. At the time of the inspection, some minor omissions were identified which were immediately addressed by the school.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The quality of boarding is inadequate overall. One aspect of this provision, helping students achieve well and enjoy what they do, is outstanding. The provision that boarding makes to support students in being healthy and to make a positive contribution are good and the boarding environment is satisfactory. Organisation and the provision's contribution to ensuring that students stay safe are inadequate. At the time of the inspection, key aspects of risk assessment had not been addressed or followed and records were not monitored with sufficient rigour. A child protection incident had not been reported or recorded as required and some aspects of security are inadequate.

Four of the five recommendations made at the last inspection have been addressed. Recommendations met include obtaining and retaining on file written permission for each young person for the administration of first aid and non-prescribed medication, and staff now have access to these. A majority of renovations to residential houses has now been completed and a system of staff appraisal is now in place. The final recommendation concerned fire safety; this inspection found all fire checks for each residential house were being undertaken regularly with fire records up-to-date.

The catering facility at the school is good, enabling the young people to enjoy a healthy, balanced diet that generally meets their needs and choices. There is very good liaison between various healthcare professionals to support the staff in meeting the young people's health and emotional needs. Health care plans detail the specific

care required to meet the young people's health needs. The school medical co-ordinator has introduced good medication procedures and first aid is well managed.

Appropriate child protection procedures are in place. Training in safeguarding children is provided for all staff; new staff and co-workers undergo an induction process which includes training on child protection, positive handling strategies and familiarisation with boarding routines. Examples of other training received include first aid and guidance in epilepsy. Students know who they can complain to and records kept of their complaints and comments are good. Young people are further protected by a robust and thorough recruitment procedure. However, not all child protection procedures are followed consistently in practice. For example, one serious incident had not been reported to the appropriate authorities as required and records held on this matter were inaccurate.

Students have opportunities in the residential houses to feed back their views and opinions in both formal and informal forums. Activities offered are varied and give students an opportunity to expand their life experience. The excellent choice and clear structure of activities means that students find boarding both interesting and enjoyable. Older students are given excellent support with independence skills and in preparing to leave the school. Interaction between boarders and staff is seen to be relaxed and warm. Within the boarding community, members of staff are very aware of each student's needs. If bullying occurs, the students are clear that the staff will deal with it and offer support to the victim and advice to the perpetrator. Students feel that sanctions are fair and say that they are encouraged and rewarded for behaving well. Although most students go home at weekends, they can contact their families and friends via mobile telephones, email and the school's telephone during the week.

Accommodation for boarders is comfortable and clean. Students are able to personalise their rooms and their privacy is protected. The school's grounds are extensive and have numerous facilities. The school has suitable risk assessments in place, although there are occasions when these are not followed. A lax approach to ensuring the safety of boarders while in their houses potentially places these vulnerable students at risk. Additionally, residential staff report that they occasionally work extended hours and at times work for up to two weeks with one day off. The school endeavours to make suitable arrangements to avoid this or to ensure that time off in lieu is given.

Fire drills, testing of fire safety equipment and other safety checks are carried out regularly. A clear policy is in place for staff to follow in the event that a student is missing. Records show that this is effectively followed if needed. Records such as those of sanctions and restraints are kept within boarding and checked by a senior member of staff. However, such monitoring is inconsistent so that it is unclear whether some key documents have been reviewed or signed off.

The school prospectus provides a good description of the services provided. The promotion of equality and diversity is good and opportunities are offered to the students to enjoy cultural activities. Levels of staffing are good and the students report that they have easy access to advice and support. The school ensures that students receive good support from professionals within school, while experts from outside the school such as psychologists and therapists are engaged when necessary. Students' individuality is clearly understood and support is tailored well to meet their idiosyncratic needs.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.⁴

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of students (standards in part 3) and must:

- ensure that arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders which have regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools (paragraph 8)
- ensure that there are adequate security arrangements in place for the grounds and buildings (paragraph 23(d))
- ensure that arrangements are in place to ensure the security of boarders which have regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools (paragraph 23(t)).

In order to meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools and associated regulations, the school should:

- ensure that all child protection incidents are reported to the appropriate authorities (breach of NMS 5.4 Appendix 1)
- ensure that effective precautions are taken to ensure the security of the school from access by unauthorised persons (breach of NMS 23.6)
- ensure that all risk assessments are acted upon to safeguard the students who board at the school (breach of NMS 32.2 and NMS 26.3)
- ensure that all records are monitored and signed by a senior member of staff (breach of NMS 32.2)
- ensure that all records of allegations or suspicions of abuse and their outcomes are clearly recorded (breach of NMS 32.2 Appendix 1)
- ensure that the school's premises and grounds (including windows and doors which present a risk to children or offer intruder access) have clear risk assessments that are followed by staff (breach of NMS 26.3)

⁴ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made

- ensure that staff's long working hours are risk assessed and do not impact on the safety of the children (breach of NMS 28.3).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- develop and use a system whereby the progress made by students and the impact of the school's interventions are monitored over time and the information used effectively to address any inconsistencies
- work with the students to consider ways in which they can more regularly contribute their views of the school.

Inspection judgements

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		✓		

Students' 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

Effectiveness of boarding provision				✓
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Steiner Waldorf residential special school		
Date school opened	1956		
Age range of students	7–19		
Gender of students	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 33	Girls: 11	Total: 44
Number of boarders	Boys: 22	Girls: 8	Total: 30
Number of students with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 32	Girls: 11	Total: 43
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 5	Girls: 0	Total: 5
Annual fees (day students)	£53,550		
Annual fees (boarders)	£53,550		
Address of school	West Hoathly West Sussex RH19 4PR		
Telephone number	01342 810268		
Email address	linda.churnside@philpotsmanorschool.co.uk		
Education Coordinator	Linda Churnside		
Care Coordinator	Andrew Duncan		
Proprietor	Philpots Manor School Ltd		