

Alderwasley Hall School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	David Muir HMI
Social care inspector	Mark Ryder

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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}

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

Alderwasley Hall School is a part of the SENAD group of schools and is also a registered children's home. It currently provides education for boys and girls aged 10 to 19 years, although it is registered for pupils from five years of age. The school caters for pupils who have complex speech, language and communication needs. Many also have a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Asperger's syndrome. The school opened in 1976 and was last inspected by Ofsted in 2008. There are currently 83 students on role; 37 currently live at the school while the remainder attend as day students. All students have a statement of special educational needs. The school draws students from across the United Kingdom, taking from 52 local authorities. The care provision was last inspected in March 2011.

The school is located on two sites. The Alderwasley Hall site accommodates students up to the age of 16. Callow Park College provides the education and residence for students who are post-16. There is further residential accommodation for students who are becoming more independent. The school has recently opened a centre for young people with acquired brain injuries on the Alderwasley Hall site.

The school's main aim is to ensure that everyone 'works together to create a happy and caring environment which enables students to learn and communicate with confidence and grow as valued members of society.' It intends to achieve this 'through high quality education and therapeutic interventions in a caring and supportive environment.'

Evaluation of the school

The quality of the education on both sites is good and all regulations are met. The school is successful in meeting its aim to develop students' confidence in learning

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

and communication. As a result of this and good teaching, students increasingly engage in education and make good academic progress after an initial stage of settling back into education. The school's use of therapies to support students is well established and is an impressive feature of the school's work. Since the previous inspection, the school's systems for self-evaluation and the use of data has improved well, so that the school is able to react to students' needs and provide them with a personalised curriculum. Arrangements for safeguarding students are robust.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. It is broad, balanced and well-planned to meet individual pupils' needs. It is based on the National Curriculum and encompasses a 'waking hours curriculum' approach where appropriate, which ensures a consistency of approach in residence and school. Planning is effective for all subjects. Curriculum areas are regularly reported on by subject leaders. This allows senior leaders to closely monitor the quality of each subject so that they are clear about where there are strengths and where improvements are needed. The impact of improvement strategies is clearly evident and staff have further robust plans for continued improvement in all areas of the school's work.

Plans for individual students are carefully tailored around their needs and interests in order to re-engage them with education. Opportunities for students to receive a range of therapies to support their language and communication needs and increase their access to the curriculum are well-targeted. Occupational therapists and speech and language therapists provide appropriate therapies and contribute to the planning and delivery of the curriculum in the classroom as well as other sessions. This cohesive multi-disciplinary approach in which expertise is shared is a strength of the school's work and has a significant impact in these areas.

The impact of therapies is systematically monitored and evaluated and this regularly leads to improvements in planning. Students, professionals, and parents and carers contribute to these evaluations. As a result of the areas of need identified, staff are better able to understand students' needs, especially when planning for students' development of empathy and feelings, and their language and social skills.

Personalised timetables show a good range of opportunities to extend the curriculum, for example, by links with local schools, colleges and work experience providers. These also provide opportunities for students to enhance their social skills. Students undertake courses appropriate to their needs to achieve recognised qualifications. In Key Stage 4, students follow a range of accredited courses including: Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network awards, Entry Level Certificates, BTEC awards and GCSEs. In the sixth form, the school offers a core curriculum, consisting of functional skills, enrichment, careers and education guidance, personal, social and health education and life skills. In addition to these, students choose from a wide range of options, which can be taken within the college or in one of the partnership provisions, including AS and A level courses. Older students also receive appropriate careers advice and guidance to support them in

their preparation for the next stage of their lives. This has been successful, with the large majority of students going on to successful further education, training or employment.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall, with no inadequate teaching. This leads to good learning. Joint observations during the inspection showed that leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning in the school and use this to inform where training can be targeted. Where weaker teaching has been identified by the school, support plans have been put in place to improve it. The best lessons are planned well to meet the interests of the students and to engage them effectively. There are appropriate links to prior and future learning. However, in some lessons, tasks are not always sufficiently adapted or activities varied to meet individuals' needs fully. Support from a highly skilled and well-trained team of teaching assistants makes a good contribution to both teaching and learning, supporting pupils in their work and providing feedback to teachers about what has been learnt in lessons by each student.

Students make good progress. Information from detailed assessments and the analysis of students' progress is being used well to identify patterns and trends in achievement. It is also used to identify where students require extra support. For example, gender-specific teaching has been introduced in information and communication technology to address differences in achievement between boys and girls. Where some individual students have made less progress, reasons have been clearly identified and actions implemented to address this. This is usually due to emotional difficulties and students have their needs met in these areas by appropriate therapies. Students' books and files show that they receive appropriate written feedback on their work and how it can be improved. A National Curriculum level is given in many cases so that students know what to be aiming for next. Increasing numbers of students move on to higher level courses when they leave Alderwasley Hall. In 2011 students gained a range of qualifications from Entry Level Certificate Level 1 through to GCSE higher grades and Level 3 qualifications. Some post-16 students have gone onto complete AS and A2 Level courses.

The school has implemented a range of plans to support students' learning and access to the curriculum. Students' 'integrated placement plan' draws these together and underpins the very effective collaboration between professionals. This integrated plan includes related, personal needs, such as any health needs, safeguarding and cultural issues. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities such as running, kayaking, climbing and sailing. A girls' group has been established in recognition of the small number of girls in the school, so that they are able to discuss issues around self-image and self-confidence. In order to increase participation in after-school activities, accommodation is offered as it is often difficult for them to return home afterwards due to transport arrangements. The school makes extensive use of its own facilities, such as the swimming pool and climbing wall to promote students participation in and enjoyment of healthy activities. Many other activities are also planned by therapists in the school to promote independence.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. Students enjoy their learning because teaching is good and lessons are planned to meet their interests. Staff in the school and the residence know the students well and value their views. As a result, during their time in the school, they develop increasingly positive attitudes to learning and work, and their self-esteem and self-confidence rises. They are involved in the life of the school and the wider community, including through involvement in the local arts festival and setting up a Santa's Grotto in the local town, among other activities. Students are involved in fund-raising for events such as Children in Need and Red Nose Day to support those with disadvantages in the wider and global communities.

Students' behaviour is good. This is the result of the high quality therapies and effective behaviour management which is consistently applied. As a result of this, relationships are generally good throughout the school and the atmosphere in lessons is positive and conducive to learning. No incidents of disruption were seen during the inspection, in lessons or around the school. This is also reflected in the improved behaviour exhibited by pupils during their time in the school and residence.

Students have positive views about their futures and are supported to make decisions about the next stage of their lives. Students' social development improves well during their time in the school and they are effectively supported to develop appropriate conversation and social skills.

Students develop their cultural understanding through such events as themed days based on specific cultures. The students enjoy these and enjoy learning about different cultures and their foods. Visits to local towns and cities also enhance this aspect, although more work is needed to develop this area further, so that students have a deeper understanding of what it means to live in modern multicultural Britain.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The welfare, health and safety of students are good. All the required policies for child protection and ensuring that students are kept safe are in place. They are implemented well and reviewed regularly. Policies are robust, comprehensive and clear, and provide all the necessary guidance for staff. The behaviour management policy provides useful guidance on rewards and sanctions, including those related to the abuse of information and communication technology. The consistent implementation of this policy helps to promote the positive ethos and ensures that there is a good environment for learning in the school, due to minimal disruption to learning in lessons.

Risk assessment for individuals, activities, classes and accommodation accurately identify potential risks and provide appropriate actions to minimise them. Procedures to ensure that all areas of the school are safe are robust. The school carries out

frequent checks of portable electrical appliances and smoke alarms, and keeps clear records of practice evacuations and checks on fire safety equipment. All staff receive training in many aspects of risk assessment and other areas of health and safety, such as first aid. All required training is up-to-date, including the training of all staff in child protection and at a higher level for designated persons.

A small minority of students stated that they do not feel safe. This was related to a few incidents where they have felt that they have been bullied, although the school has followed these up robustly and has found that they were disagreements between students. Students agree that when staff are made aware of these few incidents, they have dealt with them effectively.

Students are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles and the Ofsted questionnaire shows that a large majority of students recognise this. They have a wide range of sporting and physical activities available to them through the use of the pool, climbing wall and other local amenities and facilities. Timetabled physical education and occupational therapy sessions contribute well to the physical activities and healthy lifestyles provided for students. The food in the school is healthy and nutritious. The catering staff ensure that they meet individual dietary needs and provide vegetarian options on a daily basis.

The school has suitable plans to improve access to the curriculum, information and the site for all students, as required by the Equality Act 2010, and regular audits are undertaken to inform them.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All of the required checks on staff and others are carried out and are recorded appropriately in the single central register. All requirements are met.

Premises and accommodation at the school

There are adequate facilities and accommodation on both school sites which enable students to learn safely and effectively. Classrooms are generally spacious and there are several suitable subject-specific facilities, such as for food technology and design and technology. There is plenty of space for outdoor recreation and sporting activities. There is also a good range of additional facilities which meet students' particular needs. These include a soft play area, ball pool, swimming pool, climbing wall, multi-gym and multi-sensory facilities.

Provision of information

The school's prospectus provides parents, carers and others with all the required information. It is clear, accurate and up-to-date. Parents and carers are provided

with suitable annual reports about the attainment and progress made by their children.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has clearly written complaints procedures for students, staff and others which meet the requirements.

Leadership and management of the residential 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 proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

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

- improve the quality of planning for individual students so that tasks are varied and meet their needs and levels of learning more precisely
- provide more opportunities for students to meet people from other cultures and backgrounds to better prepare them for life in multicultural Britain
- use the outstanding teaching present in the school to model how satisfactory teaching can become good, and good teaching become outstanding.

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 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

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special		
Date school opened	31 January 1976		
Age range of pupils	5 to 19 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 66	Girls: 17	Total: 83
Number of boarders	Boys: 31	Girls: 6	Total: 37
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 66	Girls: 17	Total: 83
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 2	Girls: 1	Total: 3
Annual fees (day pupils)	£49,592		
Annual fees (boarders)	£85,369		
Email address	angelaf@alderwasleyhall.com		
Headteacher	Angela Findlay		
Proprietor	Brian Jones		