

Alderwasley Hall School

Independent Special School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	830/6016
Unique Reference Number	113021
Social care URN	SC020129
Inspection number	322261
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Jane Melbourne HMI
Social Care inspector	Dawn Taylor SCI

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).

Inspection of social care (welfare) was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2005 (as amended 2007) and under the Care Standards Act 2000 in order to inform the Secretary of State at the DCSF as to the school's continued suitability for registration as an independent school. The purpose of the inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.

This report details whether the school meets the requirements for educational provision and outlines the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

Information about the school

Alderwasley Hall School is part of the SENAD Group of independent schools for students with special educational needs and adult services. The SENAD Group's motto is: '*A brighter day... a brighter future*'. The school is located on three sites in the Derbyshire local authority area and is part of the Derbyshire Special School Improvement Cluster. It is registered for 146 students across the age range of five to 19. There are currently 105 students on roll between the ages of nine and 19. Of these, 70 board at the school for 38 weeks of the year and four board at the school for 52 weeks of the year. All of the students have speech, language and communication needs that are complex and long term. Many of the students also have a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder, often with Aspergers syndrome. The majority of students have statements of special educational needs or a co-ordinated support plan (Scotland). Students attend from all over the United Kingdom and presently represent 55 local authorities.

The school is located on two sites for education and its care provision is on three sites: Alderwasley Hall site (known as the main school) is home to students until the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11); Callow Park College, some five miles away from the main school, provides the campus and residential accommodation for post 16 students (Year 12 and 13). There is additional residential accommodation provided at Cavendish House in Matlock for more independent students. Also on the main school site is a registered children's home: Acorn Cottage. This was inspected at the same time, but the outcome of Acorn Cottage's inspection will be presented in a separate report.

Callow Park College was inspected in February 2005 and re-inspected in March 2007 under section 62 of the Learning and Skills Act and evaluated the provision for those students funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). There are no longer students at the school funded by the LSC. The education and care provision at both Alderwasley Hall and Callow Park College are reported here.

Alderwasley Hall School's mission statement is: *'We all work together to create a happy and caring environment which enables our students to learn to communicate with confidence and grow as valued members of society'*. Its aim is to achieve this through high quality education and therapeutic interventions in a caring and supportive environment.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of education and care provided at Alderwasley Hall School, including for post 16 students at Callow Park College, is good. It is significantly enhanced by a range of high quality therapies. The quality of the boarding provision is also good. The school meets all of the regulations for education and all of the National Minimum Standards for the establishment. Acorn Cottage provides a satisfactory standard of education and care. The quality of the curriculum and of teaching is good, and the assessment of students' progress is now good and improving.

Since the Callow Park College inspection in 2007, the school has improved its quality assurance processes. There is a well focussed school development plan in place, which accurately prioritises actions and provides criteria for success. Since the last main school inspection in 2005, the school has improved the quality of the curriculum so that it now meets the needs of all of the students. It has improved the quality of the planning, incorporating more detail and adaptation to students' needs and invested significantly in the professional development of staff.

Quality of education

The overall quality of education is good. Students are well served by the provision which meets its mission statement and aims. Teamwork amongst staff is strong and there are consistent approaches across the education and boarding provision, particularly with regard to the curriculum and in managing students' behaviour. Through high quality therapies, students progress well in their communication skills, confidence and self-esteem and are helped to access the curriculum. Students' individual needs shape the planning of the good curriculum, and sound schemes of work guide teachers' planning and ensure continuity of learning. As part of continual improvement and the school's quality assurance procedures, it has a programme of updating schemes of work to ensure the highest quality throughout every subject area. The appointment of specific responsibilities in particular subject areas has begun to facilitate the co-ordination of key areas. There is a good focus on basic skills. Progress routes and targets are clear. Individual education and learning plans are followed closely by students and staff. With due regard to building students' life skills and basic skills, preparation for students' economic well-being is good. Their enjoyment of the curriculum is high because it is made relevant to them. The day and evening curriculum is exciting – students take part in really valuable activities both on and off site. The ski trip is a popular feature of the school year and students particularly enjoy the outdoor pursuits, including surfing and abseiling in Cornwall. Many students learn to play a musical instrument. The overall curriculum policy has

improved since the last inspection as the regulation related to this was not fully met at that time. The school is currently working on consistency within the curriculum across both sites. Good progress is being made in this respect.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good and consequently, students make good progress. Most students demonstrate good attitudes in lessons. Effective curriculum plans are in place, including very detailed lesson plans. These are clearly displayed and specifically adapted to individual students. Teachers have good subject knowledge, with specialist teachers in most subjects and work is well matched to students' needs. Teaching styles engage the students. Students are encouraged to try things themselves with appropriate support so that they become as independent as possible. Support staff challenge the students and encourage them in every way, continually developing their thinking, speech, language and communication skills. Lessons are based on regular assessment; staff know students' needs well. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Their success is celebrated continually, raising their confidence and self-esteem. Information is shared daily between all staff, which ensures all staff are fully knowledgeable and prepared to do their best for each student and to help them.

Assessment is thorough and enables staff to track the progress of individual students. The school has worked hard to develop a framework for assessment and to incorporate the regular moderation of work related to this. It recognises there is more to do to ensure that systems are consistent across all subjects and key stages. A data set for the whole school has begun which will enable the school to track all students' progress and monitor trends. Currently, teachers' assessment of individual students, together with detailed information from care and therapies serves to ensure that the school has accurate information on each individual student and plans according to their needs. This works effectively, with appropriate targets for each student being set. Students successfully access a good range of accredited courses. The school nurtures them to develop skills and acquire qualifications that will serve them well as citizens in the future. Almost all post 16 students progress to further education of their choice. Students are safe, well cared for, well educated, and able to work towards functioning independently. Useful workshops are provided for parents on important issues so that the school and home are working collaboratively.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students are well motivated, and enjoy their education, as seen in the good level of attendance. Behaviour is good; the great majority of students behave as well as they can in lessons and around the school. A few have difficulties relating to other people. Staff are especially careful to develop these students' behaviour as positively as possible, particularly when incidents occasionally arise. Staff go to great efforts to encourage students to understand the difference between right and wrong. In lessons students help each other when they can, and do their best to control their own responses when others around them are having difficulties.

Students' self-confidence and self esteem increase well, often from very low starting points. They learn how to relate socially to others around them, how to use public transport, and how to cooperate with work colleagues. Students develop their thinking skills well, and learn how to express themselves clearly. As part of their learning about institutions and services, students meet visitors to the school and make visits in the locality. There are strong links with other schools and colleges. An after-school club gives students very good opportunities to develop their skills in dealing with different adults in a range of situations. Students have a sound awareness of other cultures and are appropriately prepared for life in a multi-cultural society.

House meetings and the student councils support the student and school community. Students take part enthusiastically in fund-raising events for various charities, hold concerts to which people from the community are invited and perform in local and cultural music festivals. Students praise what the school does for them. They say how much they like the staff, the wide range of subjects they are taught and the activities they can take part in. As one student said, *'I like the staff, all of them. They are good for helping our special needs.'*

Welfare, health and safety of the students

This aspect of the provision is good, and all of the regulations are met. Staff are trained thoroughly in the most recent safeguarding requirements and procedures as well as health and safety issues that relate to students, activities and outside visits. In 2007, the school was awarded the Sword of Honour by the British Safety Council. Students are positively encouraged to take part in many physical and leisure activities in school time and in the evenings, and they are mostly happy with the healthy foods they are given. The school has 'health-promoting school' status, and is working towards the Healthy Schools Award. Students say that they feel safe, and are confident to go to staff if they have any concerns or problems. Very few students smoke, but the school takes strong measures to promote students' health, personal care and hygiene, sex education and their awareness of the dangers of different situations, including exposure to drugs. The school fulfils its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

There are robust recruitment procedures in place to ensure that all staff, including temporary staff, have undergone the necessary checks before commencing work at the school. A central staff register has been implemented in line with the latest statutory requirements. All staff have had the required enhanced checks with the Criminal Records Bureau.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises comply with all of the relevant regulations, and are all maintained to a high standard of decoration and cleanliness, with a rolling programme of upgrading.

The re-decoration of Cavendish House and the residential accommodation at Callow Park College is in the School Development Plan and budget for Summer 2008. Both sites are in pleasant rural settings and students make good use of the extensive grounds that include good outdoor amenities such as grassy areas, adventure equipment, a small lake, a football pitch and hard courts for ball and racket games.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school meets all of the regulations for this aspect. Provision has improved since the last inspection when some information for parents was not available. The school has developed its website, has an informative prospectus and sends out regular parents' newsletters. Good and detailed information about students' progress is provided for parents several times a year, in writing, by telephone and in meetings when possible. Parents' and carers' views of the school are almost entirely positive, with very few negative aspects being noted.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school complies with all the relevant regulations and the procedures for dealing with complaints have improved since the last inspection. There have been 38 complaints made in the past twelve months by students and carers. The majority of complaints concern minor incidents, often due to misunderstandings. Procedures are being followed and documented appropriately. Students' complaints are always addressed without delay and they are kept informed of the progress in their consideration. The school modifies its practices if necessary, as it treats all complaints seriously. No complaints reached the stage of a formal panel hearing in the past eighteen months. There remains an isolated parental concern of a lack of response to a complaint made and the school is currently investigating this.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005. It has in place a three-year accessibility plan in order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002.

What the school could do to improve further

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

- continue to update schemes of work across the curriculum
- continue to develop systems of assessment and the collection of data to identify trends, inform school development and further improve provision.

Evaluation of boarding provision

The quality of the boarding provision is good. Students' health care needs are met because staff are focused and committed to ensuring the provision for health care is good. Students' individual health and intimate care needs are identified and assessed at an early stage and given a high priority. This information is recorded in a health care plan that is completed by the school's medical team and is accessible to all staff. There is excellent access to health care professionals such as occupational therapists and speech and language therapists who work closely with staff and parents to identify and meet students' needs.

The school has effective policies and procedures in place on the administration and storage of medication, which are used consistently in practice. The competence of staff to administer medication is continually assessed. The school uses over the counter remedies, which have been agreed with a doctor. Consequently, students receive care that actively safeguards their health and wellbeing. The staff have received training in first aid and epilepsy care.

Students' privacy is respected because the school has clear guidance on how to support them during personal and intimate care. Students know about the complaints procedure and are very confident that their concerns are addressed. They are clear about the school's stance on bullying and know that the responses of staff will be prompt and consistently applied.

The school has clear procedures for responding to child protection concerns. There are good links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and regular and effective staff training in child protection. Staff have a good knowledge of these policies and procedures and as a result students' wellbeing is safeguarded appropriately.

Students are assisted to gradually develop appropriate behaviour as staff skilfully identify and set achievable and realistic goals for them to work towards. Measures of support and control and consequences for unacceptable behaviour are based on establishing positive relationships and are designed to help each child. Students know what is expected of them and are given every opportunity to become involved and motivated in setting and implementing the rules that govern their own behaviour. However, records do not contain appropriate detail of the method of restraint used to effectively safeguard staff and students and sanction records do not overtly show that students are been offered the opportunity to comment. As a result, behaviour management techniques employed cannot be effectively monitored to ensure children are safeguarded fully.

Students' health and safety is protected because the school has risk assessments for all aspects of the safety of the premises and grounds which are implemented successfully in practice. The school operates a robust staff vetting procedure and staff are proactive and aware of the need to safeguard students.

There is well established support of students' educational achievement by the boarding provision at school. Effective communication between classroom staff, residential staff and therapists promotes consistency for students. Life skills and independence are key principles of the school and promoted through the 24 hour curriculum.

Students are actively encouraged to take part in leisure activities both inside the school and in the local and wider community. Staff share their own interests and encourage students to try new activities. They are able to provide good care to students and meet individual needs with the knowledge and understanding they have of them. Care plans are outstanding and link directly to Every Child Matters objectives. Students have a key worker who gives individual support and as a result identified needs are met.

Significant time is taken to build relationships and share information with families, social workers and external agencies to promote individual care programmes, tailored to students' needs. This good working partnership promotes students' welfare as they get consistent messages from both home and school. Staff are proactive in ensuring students maintain contact with parents and significant others. The school actively involves parents in the life of the school and future of their children through parent workshops and a consultation team.

Students are making good progress in their personal development because systems are in place to monitor the service and daily lives of young people currently living at the school. The organisation has established a pattern of management monitoring and reporting procedures, which is effectively implemented by the head of care and the senior care team. The school's staffing policy ensures that the level of staffing is adequate to meet every child's needs. There is good continuity of staff so that students' relationships are not disrupted.

The staff training and development programme includes a good induction and further training opportunities for all staff. Staff have a personal development plan and the school places a high emphasis on the support, training and development of its staff. As a result, they become sure of their role and individual level of responsibility very quickly. Students benefit greatly from this positive approach as they are cared for by highly motivated, suitable and knowledgeable staff.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure records of any use of physical intervention on a child by an adult details the nature of the physical intervention used (NMS 10.14)

- ensure records demonstrate that children are given an opportunity to discuss incidents and express their views (NMS 10.22).

School details

Name of school	Alderwasley Hall School		
DCSF number	830/6016		
Unique reference number	113021		
Unique reference number (social care)	SC020129		
Type of school	Special Primary, Secondary and Post 16		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1976		
Age range of students	5-19		
Gender of students	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 88	Girls: 16	Total: 104
Number on roll (part-time students)	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of boarders	Boys: 60	Girls: 14	Total: 74
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 80	Girls: 17	Total: 97
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 54	Girls: 13	Total: 67
Annual fees (day students)	£ 37,854		
Annual fees (boarders)	From £57,124 to £124,117		
Address of school	Alderwasley Belper DERBYSHIRE DE56 2SR		
Telephone number	01629 822586		
Fax number	01629 826661		
Email address	veronicaj@alderwasleyhall.com		
Headteacher	Mrs Veronica Jenkins		
Proprietor	SENAD Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Jane Melbourne HMI		
Social care inspector	Dawn Taylor SCI		
Dates of inspection	13–14 May 2008		