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The Office for Standards in Education,
Children's Services and Skills

Horton House School

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number	810/6004
Unique Reference Number (URN)	133640
URN for registered childcare and social care	SC060797
Inspection number	348726
Inspection dates	19 –20 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Christine Inkster HMI
Social care inspector	Simon Morley

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002¹, 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.

This was a light touch educational inspection which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Horton House School occupies two school sites approximately 20 minutes drive apart. There are four sites overall, but only two are providing education. One school site is in the same building as a children's home. One is a large former manor house and the other a farmhouse, with some adjacent, additional classrooms. The school opened in 2002. It provides education for up to 37 boys and girls aged between eight and 19 years with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These include severe social, emotional, educational and behavioural difficulties, some associated with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). There are currently 23 pupils on roll aged between nine and 16 years, and two over the age of 16, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. Most are day pupils, but 11 are residential in the children's homes for either 52 weeks or for term-time only. Their places, including those for 10 looked after children, are funded by a number of different local authorities. The vast majority of pupils have experienced disruption to their education prior to admission. The headteacher has been in post since January 2009. The last inspection of the school was in October 2007. The last social care inspection was in January 2010. The school aims to 'promote total education, whereby education and care combine to help children and young people achieve, manage their own behaviour, and secure for themselves a brighter future'.

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

Evaluation of the school

Horton House School provides a good quality of education and successfully meets its aims. The quality of the care provision in the children's home is good. The quality of teaching and assessment are good and enables pupils to make good progress in their learning. The curriculum is good, takes account of the National Curriculum and provides personalised programmes for individual pupils, enabling them to make good academic progress. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their behaviour are good. Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils in the school are good; safeguarding arrangements are securely in place and meet all requirements. The school has successfully addressed the issues identified at the last inspection in respect of the information for parents and carers. The school meets all of the regulations for registration as an independent school.

Quality of education

The overall quality of education is good. The good quality of the curriculum is supported by effective subject plans and schemes of work drawn from the National Curriculum modified to meet pupils' individual needs. The curriculum is broad and balanced to provide effectively for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in line with the requirements of each individual's statement of special educational needs. There is a strong emphasis on developing the key skills of literacy and numeracy and there are good opportunities for pupils to practise these skills in other subjects across the curriculum. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively in lessons; for example, pupils research topics on the internet and there are sufficient resources for pupils to regularly use ICT in lessons. However, the resources available to deliver practical aspects of science are limited. The provision for personal, social, health (PSHE) and citizenship education and religious education is a strength and does much to promote pupils' personal development and their understanding of other faiths. At Key Stage 4, pupils are able to access unit awards and Entry Level GCSEs. They study the statutory core subjects of English, mathematics and science and a variety of optional subjects including food technology, French, art and design, music, childcare, sport, history, business studies and woodwork.

Post-16 students study a 'Pathway to Independence' programme, which is implemented by both care and education staff, and this prepares them well for their future lives. It is planned to meet the individual needs of students in the key skills of literacy and numeracy as well as self-help, life, work-related, social, behaviour and independence skills. The school has links with a local college to provide pupils with the opportunity to study vocational courses. The 24 hour curriculum is well supported by education and care staff. There are a variety of extra-curricular activities available for pupils during school, in the evenings and at weekends including climbing, riding motor cycles, ice-skating, horse riding and canoeing. Pupils enjoy visits to the local library, restaurants, museums, art galleries and places of

worship with both care and education staff. Joint activities are often planned; for example, themed weeks such as a Mexican week.

The quality and effectiveness of teaching and assessment are good and, as a result, pupils make good progress. The relationships between pupils and care and education staff are very good. The use of additional adult support staff in lessons works very well and ensures that there is always an adult to whom each pupil can talk to, if the need arises. Teachers and care staff share information on a daily basis in respect of pupils' needs and these are incorporated into planning. Pupils are encouraged to work independently where possible and they are able to concentrate for extended periods of time. They have positive attitudes towards learning and persevere, even when the work is challenging. This is because teachers take every opportunity to relate work and activities to the needs and interests of individual pupils. Teachers have good subject knowledge and give clear explanations to pupils about what they are to learn. However, pupils are not always aware of the small steps they need to take to enable them to achieve their learning objective and to assess how well they have achieved in each lesson. Adults manage pupils' behaviour very well using effective and consistent strategies to encourage pupils to work hard and act responsibly. Pupils are assessed shortly after admission and then on a regular basis. There are good systems in place to monitor and record the progress made by individual pupils and the headteacher and senior managers evaluate the individual and overall performance of pupils effectively. Small class sizes ensure that teachers get to know individual pupils very well and assessment information is used effectively by teachers to plan next steps in learning for pupils. Marking identifies what pupils have done well and there are some comments to help pupils improve their work, but this is not always consistent across the school.

Pupils make good progress in relation to their capabilities and starting points. Pupils' work, lessons observed and the school's own data confirm this. Regular reports to parents and carers and placing authorities give good detail on each pupil's academic achievements and personal development.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and behaviour are good. The school promotes good behaviour well through an effective system of rewards and sanctions. Care and education staff work well together to ensure that strategies are consistent for pupils and together they enable pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning and help to prepare them for the future. The attendance of the vast majority of pupils is good because they enjoy coming to school. Pupils have a good understanding of the difference between right and wrong and their cultural development is promoted effectively through the curriculum when they learn about other cultures through geography, art, music, cookery and visits to different types of restaurants. Their spiritual awareness is also promoted effectively through PSHE and religious education, particularly as they show great respect when visiting places of worship, such as a mosque, Hindu temple and local Christian churches. Pupils learn

about public institutions and services in England in citizenship lessons, when they study local government and democracy, and when they have visitors into school, such as the police, fire service and armed forces. Pupils make a positive contribution to the community for example, through recycling for a local cafe and sharing products made in cookery and woodwork lessons. Opportunities to participate in vocational courses and the development of basic skills help to prepare pupils effectively for their future lives.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Provision for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety is good in both the education and care aspects of the school's work. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective. All staff have been trained and several members of staff have received enhanced training in child protection. Thorough checks are completed prior to the appointment of new staff, including Criminal Records Bureau checks, to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. There are effective policies and procedures in place for all aspects of health and safety, child protection, first aid and fire safety in addition to appropriate risk assessments covering all aspects of the school's work. Staff are vigilant in ensuring that pupils are safe and there are high levels of staffing in each classroom. The school works effectively with a wide range of agencies to support pupils' welfare, health and safety including, local authorities, social services, health services, the Connexions service, safeguarding children teams, the youth offending team (YOT), health assessment units, speech and language therapists and clinical and educational psychologists. Pupils are carefully monitored and information is shared with parents and carers in order to promote continuity of care between home and school. Pupils say they feel safe and they all have a personal tutor or a member of staff they can turn to if they have a worry or concern. Pupils are aware of how to live healthy lifestyles, choosing healthy foods and participating in a wide range of sports and exercise. Care and education staff effectively promote healthy living. The school fulfils its responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The care provision was judged to be good but National Minimum Standards were not all 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 January 2005.

Please see the report on Ofsted's website relating to the care provision in the children's home which should be read in conjunction with this report.

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:

- Ensure there are sufficient resources to deliver more effectively the practical aspects of science in order to better meet the interests and needs of pupils.
- Ensure that marking and feedback are of a consistent quality across the school.
- Ensure pupils are aware of the small steps they need to take to enable them to achieve their learning objective and to assess how well they have achieved in each lesson.

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 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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The quality of boarding provision

Evaluation of boarding provision		√		
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School details

Name of school	Horton House School		
DCSF number	810/6004		
Unique Reference Number (URN)	133640		
Type of school	Special		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	2002		
Age range of pupils	8-19		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 20	Girls: 5	Total: 25
Number of boarders	Boys: 7	Girls: 4	Total: 11
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 20	Girls: 5	Total: 25
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 7	Girls: 3	Total: 10
Annual fees (day pupils)	£25,000		
Annual fees (boarders)	£180,000		
Email address	matthew@hortonest.karoo.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Matthew Stubbins		
Proprietor	Mrs Joan Appleby		
Reporting inspector	Christine Inkster HMI		
Dates of inspection	19 – 20 May 2010		

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC060797
Inspection date	20 May 2010
Inspector	Simon Morley
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	14 January 2010
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

The children's home is part of a multi-site residential special school. Overall the school has the facilities to offer residential accommodation for up to 21 children over four different sites. The school's registration with Ofsted as a children's home, allows for up to 10 of the 21 children to be accommodated at the school all year round. Other children attend the school either daily or board during term time, going home during the holidays and often at weekends.

The main school site has accommodation for eight, is a large detached building in its own grounds in a rural village. This was not being used for boarders at the time of inspection; all three other sites were. Local amenities are few but the school has its own transport and public bus services are accessible nearby.

The second site is a large detached building set in its own grounds with accommodation for seven. There is a separate lodge on this site with further accommodation for up to two young people. Local amenities are within easy access. Two other sites are both semi-detached houses in residential areas and can accommodate another two young people each. Both have good access to local amenities.

Summary

This was an announced key inspection covering all the outcome areas with two days notice given to the provider. The inspection of the children's home was integrated with an Ofsted inspection of the school carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002. The school inspection report is published separately on Ofsted's website and should be read in conjunction with this report.

There is effective leadership and management of the home which has improved outcomes for young people and the overall quality rating is good. The promotion of health, safety, welfare and education are all good. A key strength is the quality of relationships between staff and young people and support for young people to develop. Young people, when asked, frequently commented the best thing about the school were the staff. There are some minor breaches of national minimum standards and regulations which have not affected outcomes for young people. The main area for improvement is in the management of admissions to ensure that new admissions do not have an adverse impact on young people moving in and those already at the home.

As a result of this inspection the registered provider is required to: improve the management of admissions, make all required notifications of serious incidents, keep up to date all required records, ensure all matters required are part of the internal monitoring and provide staff with separate sleeping in accommodation.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no statutory actions or good practice recommendations made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

There are effective arrangements for supporting young people to have good healthy lifestyles. This ensures their health care needs are met, good health is promoted and protected by the home's policies, procedures and care practice.

Young people's health needs are assessed and identified during the admission process. Staff use this information to help ensure young people receive good healthcare. Health needs are regularly reviewed after medical appointments and health checks. Young people are involved in planning their healthcare and they get plenty of support and encouragement to take an interest in their own health. Staff work with other professionals to help support young people's healthcare and ensure they have access to the necessary health services they need to remain in good health. Young people are given plenty of opportunities to take part in physical and sports activities to help keep fit and healthy.

Young people are encouraged to eat a healthy diet and there are opportunities for them to learn and develop their cooking skills. Meals are mainly cooked by staff, reflect young people's choices and are suitably nutritious and wholesome. Young people like the food provided, can have an alternative choice to the planned menu and get plenty to eat and drink.

Staff are trained in first aid in the event of any accidents and there are good, safe procedures for ensuring young people get any necessary medication at the right times.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people feel safe living at the home and their welfare is well protected by the home's policies, procedures and practice. This effectively ensures young people's safety is protected and they are kept free from harm. Staff have safeguarding training and understand the correct procedures to follow if there are any suspicions or allegations of abuse, to keep young people safe. There are well developed links with the local authority safeguarding team and senior managers have a good understanding and experience of effective safeguarding action. This helps ensure young people are safeguarded well. Parents and responsible authorities are notified, in most cases but not always, of serious incidents involving young people. These notifications are to ensure all necessary authorities are informed of all safeguarding issues. The occasional time this has not happened has not impacted on the subsequent safeguarding of young people.

Staff are effective in supporting young people to develop good social behaviour. There are incentives for young people to behave well based on their individual needs. There are plenty of verbal prompts from staff to help promote good behaviour. When young people have struggled to behave well staff will sit down and discuss different strategies to help young people cope well. Staff use appropriate sanctions if behaviour has been poor. Young people are clear about accepted standards of behaviour and agree that rules and sanctions are fair. As a result of the approach to behaviour management young people behave well and are able to develop good social skills.

As a safety necessity staff will physically intervene if young people's behaviour is putting them or others at risk of harm. Staff are trained how to do this in a safe way. Good records are kept of any incidents and these are monitored well to ensure there is safe appropriate practice and

young people are protected. Similarly there is an effective approach to tackling any form of bullying helping to ensure that young people are able to live at the home free from being bullied. Staff are quick to resolve disputes and there is good supervision of young people minimising the risks of bullying.

It is very rare that young people are missing from the home and there is effective practice to ensure they return home safely if it does happen.

Young people know how to complain, there is information about this around the home and young people are frequently asked for their views and any complaints. Young people feel they can talk to staff who will listen to them. Young people benefit from having their privacy respected, personal records and information are kept confidential and telephone calls can be made in private.

Young people live in a well-maintained home that is free from hazards. They benefit from a safe physical environment and an improved approach to risk management. This helps keep young people free from harm and minimises the risks to their safety.

There is a thorough approach to the employment of new staff to make sure only suitable staff are employed to work with vulnerable young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

There are good arrangements for supporting young people to achieve well and enjoy a wide range of leisure and social activities.

Young people have positive views of the home, staff and how they are cared for and supported. Each young person benefits from having a good placement plan, implemented in practice, detailing the support they will get while they are living at the home. Young people frequently report that one of the best things about the home are the staff. Staff are flexible and open to supporting a wide range of needs and have developed links with a wide range of other agencies to help provide young people with additional support.

Staff are very keen to promote the educational achievements of young people. There is good communication and integration between care and teaching staff. Young people benefit from a good holistic approach to their care. Young people have good school attendance and staff are effective at giving young people practical and emotional support to do well. All round the setting ensures there are good educational outcomes for young people.

Young people are supported well to take part in a wide range of leisure and social activities both in and outside the home. Young people benefit from being able to pursue their hobbies and interests, develop their skills and self-esteem.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

There is an admissions process for supporting young people to settle into their new home. Procedures allow for planned and sensitive arrangements as well as for young people moving in in more emergent circumstances. Although risks are managed to try and ensure that the impact of any new young person moving in is not a negative one, this is not well evidenced

and not recorded in decisions about admissions. Recent admissions have led to a wide age range of young people living at the home with a wide range of needs. High staffing levels and current flexibility of accommodating young people at different sites has ensured this has not had a negative impact on outcomes for young people. Not all required information is obtained about young people prior to their admission. This affects the quality of placement plans and may risk some individual care needs being overlooked. As a result these two breaches of national minimum standards and regulations have limited the judgement for this outcome area to satisfactory.

Each young person has an individual placement plan which details the support a young person will receive from the home. These plans are based on assessment information of a young person's needs and potential risks to their welfare and safety. Individual plans include specific individual, cultural and religious needs as well as care needs. Young people also have a recorded daily routine and the support they need to follow this. Daily care records reflect the content of these plans and show the actions taken by the staff are to meet the identified needs of young people.

Young people are involved in their plans and have regular time with staff to talk about their progress and any anxieties. Young people's plans are reviewed regularly with them. Their views and wishes are listened to, respected and influence how they are looked after. There are very good relationships between young people and staff, who provide a nurturing and caring environment. As a result young people are able to develop well.

This is a notable strength of the home.

Staff and the management team monitor the plans and can review them if needed in line with young people's needs, progress and development. Young people are involved in this and in formal statutory reviews with placing authorities. As a result young people are able to have a say in making decisions about their lives.

Young people regularly see their relatives who are also welcome to visit the home, as long as this is in line with their placement plan and is not putting them at risk of harm. There is good support from the home to help young people with travel arrangements to ensure contact is maintained.

Young people's views are valued and there is good practice to make sure they can influence their lives and the management of the home. Young people feel listened to, respected and valued and there is a good response to their views and wishes.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people receive good support to help them develop their independence on an individual level based on their needs and abilities. Young people, with the agreement of placing authorities, are able to stay at the home until they are ready to move on. Staff ensure there is regular contact and support from other professionals and agencies involved in young people leaving the home.

Young people enjoy homely accommodation that is decorated, furnished and maintained to a good, and in some places, an outstanding standard. There is plenty of space and a good range of facilities. Young people all have a good size single bedroom, some with en-suite facilities

and there are additional bathrooms to share. There is plenty of playrooms both in and outside where young people enjoy playing. The home does not provide enough sleeping-in rooms when more than one staff member sleeps in on the same night so staff have to share. This does not comply with national minimum standards but was not seen to impact on the care and outcomes for young people.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is a good Statement of Purpose available, to inform professionals and members of the public about how care is provided at the home. Before admission staff will also provide as much information as they can about the home to young people so that they know what to expect if they go to stay there. On admission young people get to keep a user friendly guide to the home to refer to, which helps explain the rules and routines.

Young people benefit from being looked after by a competent staff team, with a broad range of skills and experience among its members. Staff undertake a range of training helping them develop and maintain skills and knowledge to provide good quality care. Some staff have the recommended care qualification and other staff are working towards achieving this so that the home can maintain the 80% target of staff who are qualified. Young people benefit also from good staffing levels so there is plenty of support with their care, education, activities, family contact, meetings and appointments.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Care is based on young people's individual needs and there are good outcomes for young people as a result. There is good support and encouragement for young people to understand and respect different cultures and difference in others. Record keeping is good, which reflects the individuality, needs, progress and development of young people. This includes certificates and photographs of young people's achievements and lives at the home.

The manager is competent and experienced. There are monitoring and quality assurance systems in place but these do not always monitor all aspects of care required by regulation. This was not seen to impact negatively on outcomes for young people. The senior management team is enthusiastic and committed to continuous development and bringing best practice into the home. There are ongoing plans to achieve this which take into account feedback and views of young people. Overall the home is managed well and ensures good outcomes for the young people living there.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
20	ensure notifications take place in accordance with this regulation (Regulation 30)	31 July 2010

33	ensure that all matters set out in Schedule 6 are included in the monitoring arrangements of the care of young people (Regulation 34, Schedule 6)	31 July 2010
35	ensure children's case records include all the information required by this regulation. (Regulation 28, Schedule 3)	31 July 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure the needs of the child concerned, and the likely effects of his/her admission upon the existing group of residents, are taken into account, and recorded, in decisions on admission to the home (NMS 5.7)
- ensure where more than one staff member sleeps in on the same night, there are separate sleeping-in rooms. (NMS 24.16)