

Southways School

Independent special school standard inspection report

DfE registration number	928/6253
Unique Reference Number (URN)	126152
Inspection number	385159
Inspection dates	20–21 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Anne Duffy HMI

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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}

Information about the school

Southways forms part of the education services of Families for Children, an independent fostering agency. Originally established to provide education for some of the children placed with the agency, it also makes provision for those placed by local authorities. The school aims to encourage pupils to, 'reach their full potential, enriching them with the skills, values and experiences which will guide them successfully through their whole lives'. Situated near the West Sussex town of Worthing, it provides education for up to six pupils aged between seven and eleven years with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Southways was last inspected in April 2008 when it met all but one of the regulations. Soon afterwards, the school went through a period when pupil numbers were very low. However, they have since increased and at the time of this inspection there were four pupils on roll. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and some have learning difficulties in addition to their behavioural needs. The former headteacher has recently retired and this role has been taken over by the acting headteacher who is also the main class teacher.

The school has recently made a material change request to the Department for Education to extend its age range to include pupils aged six years.

Evaluation of the school

Southways School provides an outstanding quality of education and makes outstanding provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils. The strong concern for pupils' safeguarding is supported well by the processes of the umbrella organisation. Curricular provision is good and meets the needs of the pupils well. Pupils are increasingly motivated to do well and, as a result, make outstanding progress overall. Teaching is outstanding and supported by good processes for assessment. The school has addressed the unmet regulation from the last inspection and now meets all the regulatory requirements. The aims of the school are met well and it is well placed to make the proposed change to extend the age range. Agreement to this request is recommended by the inspector.

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

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

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. Based on the National Curriculum, it is well tailored to meet the individual needs of the pupils. Curriculum policies are reviewed regularly and they support class planning well. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to become independent learners and to develop their interests in different subjects. Pupils respond well to this and thoroughly enjoy exploring different ideas in class. This is reflected in the outstanding progress that they make in speaking and listening. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very strong and contributes very effectively to pupils' understanding of how to care for themselves and treat others, which they do their very best to apply. Pupils have opportunities to experience art, and design and technology as well as cooking which they thoroughly enjoy. Developments to some curriculum areas were delayed when the pupil numbers dropped to one. However, improvements have now been made to the information and communication technology (ICT) facilities and the school has recently added regular music sessions to the curriculum. The school has previously admitted pupils aged six on an individual basis with the agreement of the Department for Education. Records show that it has been able to deliver an effective curriculum for this age group and is able to plan appropriately for any future admissions.

Teaching is outstanding, characterised by high expectations and very good relationships between staff and pupils. It is especially successful in the way in which a range of approaches and resources are used to stimulate and maintain pupils' interest and re-engage them in learning. For example, the link between the history topic of the Victorians and the story, 'The Secret Garden', in literacy inspired some very good written work. This prompted one girl to say, 'Literacy is my favourite because you have to know how to write and read.' Work is tailored extremely well to challenge each pupil to make the best possible progress. Resources are appropriate both for the current age range and for younger pupils. Support is effectively given, especially when the teaching assistant works alongside, rather than directly with, an individual pupil. In this way pupils are able to see good learning being modelled but also know that help is at hand once they have already tackled the work for themselves. Assessment is good; clear processes are in place for tracking pupils' long term progress against National Curriculum levels. However, opportunities for staff to maintain their knowledge of mainstream best practice have, to date, been rather limited. As a result, they are not as confident as they could be when making assessments against national norms.

Pupils make outstanding progress overall, most particularly in their speaking and listening skills and in their attitudes to learning. They rightly talk with pride about the progress they have made since joining the school. Although some resistance is still evident at times, they generally work hard and are increasingly motivated to improve their work. They respond extremely well to opportunities to learn about others through their topic work and to talk about their own experiences, and this helps them to develop cooperative working skills. As a result of the outstanding progress

made, the school has a very good track record of supporting successful transition back to mainstream schooling where this has been appropriate for individual pupils.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. In contrast to some of their previous experiences, pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and this is evident in their good attendance. One member of staff aptly described them as 'hopping and skipping across the playground' in the mornings. In response to the school's evident care for them, pupils make exceptional progress in managing their anger and anti-social behaviour. As a result, pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Staff encourage pupils to take responsibility for the resources which are used in class, and at play, and they enjoy this opportunity to contribute to the day's routines. They show themselves able to think of others through fund raising activities which they clearly see as important. 'Children in Africa are starving and they need our help', said one pupil. Acquisition of the key skills of numeracy and literacy are supported extremely effectively by linked activities. For example, trips to a nearby garden centre introduce pupils to the skills of planning and using money which will support their economic well-being in later life. Until recently, limited opportunities to use ICT have meant that development in this area is less strong but is now improving. Knowledge and awareness of different lifestyles and cultures, as well as public services and institutions, are supported well through different projects, visits, and even occasional appearances on stage at the local theatre.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school makes outstanding provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. Its diligence in ensuring that all pupils are safe is evident and procedures for safeguarding are robust. There is little staff turnover so that pupils feel secure with people they know. As one pupil stated, 'I feel safe with them'. Staff are suitably trained in first aid and the arrangements for fire and other emergencies are well established and are implemented effectively. Staff training in child protection is up to date and these procedures are put into practice immediately if a concern arises. Up-to-date risk assessments are in place for individual pupils, for teaching, external areas and for educational visits. The provision of fruit and plenty of discussion about the contents of packed lunches encourages healthy eating very effectively. The personal, social and health education curriculum promotes other aspects of healthy living very well indeed. Opportunities for outdoor play and learning are enhanced by weekly swimming sessions and trips to a local activity centre. There is a newly revised plan in place which demonstrates how the school intends to further improve facilities for adults and children in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school checks all staff and others to ensure their suitability to work with children. It maintains the required single central register in line with requirements. It is aware of its responsibilities with regard to ensuring that the appropriate checks are carried out when using teaching or advisory staff from the local authority on a regular basis.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The attractive stable conversion provides very safe and attractive teaching accommodation and areas for play. The premises are well suited to the current age group and can easily accommodate the younger age range that the school is requesting. Furniture, fittings and classroom accommodation are all suitable or adaptable for younger pupils. High standards of display encourage pupils to take a pride in their school and contribute to the feeling that this is, in the words of the acting headteacher, 'a place to come to work'.

Provision of information

All parents and carers responded positively to the questionnaire stating that they were happy with the school and the information they receive. One parent described the communication as outstanding, adding, 'We communicate on a very regular basis'. Up-to-date information is given to parents and carers on how well their children have done at school and on any incidents that may have occurred. The use of home-school books and regular telephone calls also ensure that the school knows about any difficulties a pupil may be having at home. All policies and related information are provided, or made available, in line with requirements. This includes the provision of details of academic performance and progress during the preceding school year which was an unmet regulation at the last inspection.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

Procedures for dealing with complaints are available on request and are compliant with the regulations.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all 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 point for development.

- enable the high quality of teaching to be further enhanced by building links with other schools in order to keep abreast of developments and best practice in mainstream as well as specialist settings.

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 school		
Date school opened	1999		
Age range of pupils	7–11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 4	Total: 4
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 4	Total: 4
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£31,890		
Address of school	The Vale House Findon Road Findon Worthing West Sussex BN14 0RA		
Telephone number	01903 877448		
Email address	g.jay@families-for-children.co.uk		
Acting headteacher	Gail Jay		
Proprietor	Families for Children		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



22 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Southways School, Findon, BN14 0RA

Thank you for helping me to learn about your school. I really enjoyed my visit. It was good to meet you and to see how well you are doing. I am writing this letter to tell you what I found.

Southways School provides you with an outstanding education which helps you to make excellent progress in your learning. There are plenty of interesting things for you to do both in and out of school. It was good to see how much you enjoy using the spaces you have to play and work in. You seem to enjoy school much more than you have done before and I could see that you are trying very hard indeed to improve your behaviour. Well done!

All the staff support you and they all want you to do as well as you can. Everybody works very hard to make sure that you get any help you or your family might need. It was good to see you taking part in activities and I was pleased to know how much you are enjoying your work on the Victorians. You can continue to improve your work by concentrating well and trying things on your own before asking for help. It will also help you if you try to think about what you have learnt at the end of every lesson. I have suggested that your school could link with other schools so that the various staff could learn from each other.

I hope that you continue to try hard and do well in the future.

Best wishes

Anne Duffy
Her Majesty's Inspector