



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
Eagle House School
Independent special school
DfES ref no: 315/6081

Dates of inspection: 31 January - 3 February 2005

© Crown copyright 2005. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Inspection reports are available on the Ofsted web site (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The web site lists Ofsted independent school inspection reports, together with information on Ofsted's contact with the independent sector.

Contents

Section	Page
Introduction and summary	1
Purpose and scope of the inspection	1
Information about the school	1
Summary of main findings	2
What the school does well	2
What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations	2
What the school must do to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002	2
Next steps	2
Compliance with the regulations for registration	3
1. The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of the curriculum	3
The quality of the teaching and assessment	6
2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils	9
3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils	11
4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff	13
5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation	14
6. The quality of information for parents and other partners	16
7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints	16
School details	18

Introduction and summary

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Eagle House school is an independent day special school which opened in January 2004. It provides for up to 56 boys and girls from 4 to 16 years with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and associated social and communication difficulties. Currently there are 31 pupils aged from 4 to 11 years because the school is still at the stage of admitting pupils up to its capacity. All pupils attend full-time and are referred to the school by the surrounding boroughs, who also fund their placement. The school employs 10 teachers, the majority of whom have qualified status. The school is located in two buildings, Eagle House and Eagle Court, which are on the same site. The original building (Eagle House) is Grade 1 listed and thought to date from 1705. Eagle Court is a modern building designed in the same style as Eagle House. In addition to its educational provision the school also has a clinic staffed by qualified professionals who provide help and advice to pupils and their families.

The school aims to provide a safe learning environment for pupils in which they develop as young people and feel confident to adapt to changing circumstances. By the time pupils leave, the school aims to have developed their communication capabilities, their self-confidence, self-control, independence, sensitivity and consideration for others, a pride in themselves and an interest in their surroundings.

Summary of main findings

Eagle House is a very good school, which benefits from the clear vision and good leadership of its headteacher. Pupils make good progress in their learning and it is evident this is something they enjoy. Parents are encouraged to become fully involved in the education of their children. The enthusiasm and consistent practice of all teachers and their assistants ensure that pupils concentrate well and are motivated to succeed. The quality of the curriculum is very good. It is enhanced through teachers' very good preparation of lessons that provide challenging and highly individualised opportunities for learning. This is complemented by additional provision from the school's clinic. The work of the clinic professionals enables pupils to manage their disorders better and enhances the work undertaken by staff in the classrooms. Teachers and their assistants work hard to increase pupils' communication skills which enable pupils to increase their tolerance of change. The school is successful in this, one of its central aims.

What the school does well

- it provides very good teaching and learning opportunities based on a very good curriculum, supported by effective schemes of work;
- it enables pupils to manage their disorders better through professional and skilled interventions which provide pupils with strategies to manage these;
- it closely monitors and safeguards pupils' welfare and well-being;
- it offers to pupils a very good range of opportunities through which they can develop their personalities;
- it offers sound advice to parents and provides concerned care to its pupils who make good progress based on the good relationships which result; and
- it effectively tracks the progress of pupils well by means of secure monitoring procedures.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations

- prepare and implement a written policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school, as detailed in section 3 of this report; and
- complete more rigorous checks prior to the appointment of staff as identified in section 4.

What the school must do to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002

In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA, the school should:

- devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.

Next steps

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

- introduce a comprehensive induction procedure for all new staff.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The school succeeds in its aim to offer a broad and balanced curriculum to its pupils. All subjects of the National Curriculum, appropriate for pupils in Years 1 to 6, are taught. The curriculum for pupils in the Foundation Stage follows a programme closely linked to the national guidance. Where necessary, teachers skilfully adapt the curriculum, to provide personalised opportunities for pupils. The requirements of each pupil's statement of special educational need are met. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum provides all pupils with suitable opportunities to develop their self-esteem and confidence. It provides sensitive advice about healthy living and relationships. The curriculum places a strong and successful emphasis on pupils' development of self-management skills. This is supported through the work of clinical professionals employed by the school as well as through a specialised communication curriculum designed for the specific needs of pupils with ASD.

Literacy and numeracy for all pupils are provided very well. These are taught as separate subjects and also incorporated into most other areas of the curriculum, such as science, mathematics, PSHE and music.

Where necessary the individual requirements identified in pupils' statements are further provided through the school's clinical support service. This includes individual sessions of speech therapy, clinical psychology, occupational therapy and music therapy. Educational psychologists also work alongside teachers within classrooms. The work they do complements the academic curriculum.

The timetable gives sufficient time for all subjects and this gives a good balance to pupils' learning. Little time is lost during the course of the day and lessons are generally intensive periods of learning lasting 30 minutes. Staff make smooth transitions between lessons and successfully re-engage pupils in the ensuing topic or subject.

All subjects have appropriate schemes of work and these are used extensively to plan work undertaken by pupils. Elements from these are used to draw up individual education plans and so provide a secure continuity in learning. These also offer a degree of flexibility so that teachers can modify programmes to suit the needs of individuals. Curriculum leadership is developing well. The head teacher has now appointed leaders for each subject, though the time they have been in these posts is too little to have yet taken significant effect.

Links between pupils' homes and the school are good and enhance the curriculum provided by the school. Messages are routinely sent home by means of the home-school book and there are frequent other contacts, such as home visits by staff which further encourage parents to take an interest in the education of their children.

The quality of the teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is good. In most lessons teaching was at least good and in some lessons it was very good and excellent. Preparation of lessons and relationships in Year 6 are very good. However outcomes to some of these lessons were unsatisfactory; because the extreme behaviours of some pupils in this group destroyed efforts of different teachers to provide learning. The school management is working with class teachers and the clinic professionals to address the particular problems involving the social grouping of Year 6.

Staff use a variety of teaching techniques and methods. These include TEACCH (Treatment of Education of Autistic and Communication Handicapped Children) and SPELL (Structure, Positive approaches and expectations, Empathy, Low-arousal Links). These are also supplemented by communication systems such as Makaton signing and PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System).

In all classes teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to achieve. Planning of the lessons is meticulous and fully takes into account the attainment and previous learning of pupils. These plans are derived from equally good schemes of work and provide individual tasks which challenge pupils to learn more. Teachers have a good understanding of the special needs of the pupils and use this knowledge to set thoughtful objectives for each pupil to achieve.

A common feature of teaching is that teachers have high expectations that pupils will make progress. This contributes to a good ethos in the school and most pupils play their part by working hard at all times. Where pupils may become frustrated teachers and their assistants instantly respond with well-considered support. For example, in a class for Foundation Stage pupils the teacher had realised that the playing of music encouraged a particular pupil to remain seated and concentrate on his work. Both she and her assistants used this device subtly in order to keep the pupil fully focused on his task, with the result that he was able to join in a rhyme about letter-sounds.

Teachers' expectations about pupils' behaviour are also high. They use simple management techniques which pupils understand and which reward good behaviour and work. Behaviour throughout the school is mostly very good but the most effective management of this occurs where pupils are involved in evaluating their own behaviour. An example of this very good practice was seen in a class for Year 4 pupils.

In the very best lessons staff work as close teams who support each other in providing good opportunities for learning and managing pupils' behaviour. They do this with considerable dedication and skill. These lessons also include very challenging tasks which are supported by individualised and appropriate resources. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils were required to identify simple geometric shapes and then describe what it was that made them different. The pupils achieved this well and realised for themselves that similar figures could be of different size yet still retain their characteristics. In this example the teacher effectively extended the knowledge and understanding of the pupils.

Pupils' learning is underpinned by very effective assessment procedures. Although in its infancy, the school already has a tracking system in operation which enables teachers to

identify accurately the rate and quality of pupils' progress. Progress is referenced to national norms such as P-levels or National Curriculum levels. Milestones in pupils' progress are also recorded through evidence sheets which are closely linked to each pupil's individual education plan.

The headteacher has put in place a regular training programme for all staff. This has included a range of appropriate topics, such as Visual Strategies and Communication and Introduction to Sensory Integration. Along with other topics, this has brought a unity of provision to the teaching and learning within the school. However, despite the international character of the staff group the school has not put in place an induction procedure for new staff.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school is very strongly committed to promoting all aspects of pupils' personal development. Its principles and ethos focus on the importance of providing pupils with the personal skills, knowledge and understanding that will enable them to be included in wider society.

There is good provision for pupils' spiritual development. School assemblies have a social or moral theme, such as 'helping others' and include a short period of time to encourage pupils to reflect and think about others, which contributes well to their spiritual development. Subjects of the curriculum in addition to religious education also provide elements of spirituality. Simple experimental work in science, such as seeing a cake 'rise' in the oven, encourages pupils to 'wonder why?' Events such as the school's very successful Tsunami Appeal Fund also help pupils to think about the wider world in which they live.

Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. Simple, but effective, class rules emphasise the idea of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. This idea is further reinforced through adults' high expectations of behaviour and consistent application of behaviour strategies. Very high quality individual behaviour and management plans also contribute to developing pupils' moral awareness by focussing on the importance of making choices, being responsible for those choices and appreciating the idea that actions have consequences.

Pupils' social development is provided for very well. Over two-thirds of those parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire thought that the school helped their children to become more mature and to take on responsibility. There are many planned ways in which this is achieved. The PSHE programme includes topics such as 'people who help us' and 'road safety' and it is very effectively supported by whole school and class events. These are used very well to broaden pupils' experiences. There have been visits to the London Aquarium and Covent Garden Transport Museum as well as the regular use of local facilities. For instance, pupils walk to the local library each week where they are involved with pupils from other schools in listening to a story read by a librarian. Visitors to the school also help to develop pupils' social awareness and understanding of the community; the community police officer and fire-fighters have spoken to, and worked with, pupils.

The school encourages pupils' cultural and multi-cultural development very effectively. This occurs routinely through subjects such as music, art, English, religious education and history but specific events are also planned. An assembly with the theme of 'Australia Day', the celebration of Chinese New Year, a trip to a Buddhist temple and a visit from the local vicar have all combined to extend pupils' horizons. In a very good literacy lesson for Year 4 pupils a reading of a book about the life of Martin Luther King produced some very thoughtful responses about racial issues.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Pupils' welfare and well-being are safeguarded through very good practices. Pupils are given consistent and close adult attention at all times. Staff are attentive and responsive to pupils' academic and emotional needs and because of this pupils are given many opportunities to thrive and grow in self-confidence.

There are appropriate policies which show in detail the procedures to safeguard the health and welfare of pupils. The majority of these are implemented meticulously and account for the very good standards of care to be found in the school. However, the policy for visits away from the school is not always implemented according to its requirements. Staff fail to clearly identify what risks might be entailed in these visits. They also sign the risk assessment form themselves, giving permission to undertake the visit. This is a breach of the school's own policy guidelines.

The behaviour management system is firmly rooted in rewarding positive behaviours. It is implemented consistently and accounts for the generally very good behaviour to be seen in the school. The practice also encourages pupils to try their best in their work. Unsatisfactory behaviour is viewed as part of each pupil's condition. When this occurs the individual behaviour management plan for the pupil is reviewed and new approaches put into operation. Pupils are also encouraged to consider the effect of what they do and incidents are brought to a conclusion that has regard for their dignity. Staff make appropriate records of any poor behaviour but this practice could be further improved by more effective evaluation of the causes and outcomes.

The school maintains an appropriate admission register. Attendance registers are completed satisfactorily. Fire-safety inspections and procedures are satisfactory. A recent visit by the local fire-safety officer confirmed that the buildings comply with the Fire Precautions Regulations. First-Aid staff are available at all times and tamper-proof, First-Aid cabinets are available in higher risk areas such as kitchens. The school has undertaken a wide and imaginative range of improvements to this listed building to comply with the DDA. It has not yet written an access plan which would be implemented over the next three years.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets all but one of the regulations.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- prepare and implement a written policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school which has regard to Department for Education and Skills guidance (paragraph 3 (2)(c)).

What does the school need to do to comply with the DDA?

In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA the school should:

- devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The staff of the school includes 10 teachers the majority of whom have qualified status. Thirteen learning support assistants help them in the classrooms. In addition to its educational provision the school also provides a clinic staffed by appropriately qualified professionals. There are appropriate procedures in place to obtain clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau for all staff prior to their appointment. The procedures, which check identities and professional qualifications, are secure but there is no record of medical checks that ensure staff are fit to perform their roles.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- ensure that prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, appropriate checks have been carried out to confirm their medical fitness, and that such information has been taken into account in determining whether their appointment will be confirmed (paragraph 4(c)).

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The school is located within two large buildings which occupy the same site. Even though the older building has legal restrictions on it, resulting from its listed status, the school has imaginatively adapted the accommodation and it effectively supports pupils' learning. Provision for pupils in Years 1 to 5 is in the larger of these buildings nevertheless they both have generously proportioned classrooms. The smaller, though still spacious, building is currently shared between Year 6 and Foundation Stage pupils. The layout of this building is such that the work of one group does not interfere with that of the other. The school has

immediate plans to admit older pupils, up to Year 11, who will also occupy this building. The facilities being prepared for them are of good quality.

There are specialist facilities, such as two kitchens, which pupils use to develop their life-skills. One of these is being prepared as a commercial facility for secondary age pupils who will use this to also develop their work skills. There is also an art room and additional therapy rooms. The grounds include separate play and recreation areas for each age group in which pupils might safely play. The area for Foundation Stage pupils has large play equipment appropriately surrounded by a safety surface.

The quality of fittings in the school is good. For example, special lights have been provided so that pupils who may be photo-sensitive to normal fluorescent tubes are unaffected, and all glass has been protected with sheets of unbreakable poly-carbonate. The use of colour throughout the school has been considered in order to create low stimulation environments. Most classrooms have attractive displays of pupils' work. Much of this is within tamper-proof display cases. These allow pupils' work to be kept safe and enable them to appreciate how much their work is valued.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

The school provides a wide range of good quality information for parents and other partners. The school has a helpful website which parents can access to find out more about the school and its policies. Additionally the school also publishes an informative prospectus which is reinforced by regular newsletters.

Parents are fully included in the management of their children's special needs. Staff from the school provide seminars for parents which enable them to understand and gain advice on how their children can be supported. A majority of parents think the school keeps them well informed, particularly about the progress made by their children.

The prospectus sets out the school's admission arrangements as well as its aims and philosophy. This also helpfully lists all the policies by which the school operates, copies of which parents may request.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints

There is a very effective policy for dealing with complaints. The school makes reference to the policy in its prospectus, and informs parents how they may obtain a copy of the procedures. The procedures are comprehensive and clearly written, in a manner that is easily understood. The effectiveness is evident in parents' views. Of those who replied to the

parents' questionnaire, the overwhelming majority confirmed that they understood the procedures.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details

Name of school:	Eagle House School
DfES ref number:	315/6081
Type of school:	Day special school for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	4 – 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 23, Girls 8, Total 31
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 23, Girls 8, Total 31
Annual fees (day pupils):	Pupils of primary age: £38,000 Pupils of secondary age: £42,000
Address of school:	224 London Road Mitcham Surrey CR4 3HD
E-mail address:	admin@eaglehouseschool.co.uk
Telephone number:	020 8687 7050
Fax number:	020 8687 7055
Headteacher:	Mr Tom Coulter
Proprietor:	Mr P Conrathe & Mr M Conrathe
Lead Inspector:	Mr Tom Smith
Dates of inspection:	31 January - 3 February 2005

Notes