



Spring Hill School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121774
LEA North Yorkshire
Inspection number 281096
Inspection dates 19 June 2006 to 20 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Bob Thompson CfBT Lead Inspector

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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|------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Type of school | Special | School address | Palace Road |
| School category | Non-maintained special | | Ripon |
| Age range of pupils | 10 to 19 | | North Yorkshire HG4 3HN |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01765 603320 |
| Number on roll | 32 | Fax number | 01765 607549 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Mr A Chisenhale-Marsh |
| Date of previous inspection | 13 November 2000 | Headteacher | Mrs L Nelson |

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| Age group | Inspection dates | Inspection number |
| 10 to 19 | 19 June 2006 - 20 June 2006 | 281096 |

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Introduction

The inspection of the school's education and boarding provision was carried out jointly by two Additional Inspectors and one Inspector from the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI). The separate CSCI report can be found on the CSCI website.

Description of the school

Spring Hill School is a Barnardos non-maintained special school for up to 40 pupils and students. At present there are 26 boys and 6 girls on roll between the ages of 9 and 19. All pupils and students have statements of special educational need. The majority have severe learning difficulties; others have emotional and behavioural difficulties; autistic tendencies; and moderate learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Attainment on entry is low, due to pupils special educational need and being absent from formal education for long periods of time. A key feature of the school is the support which is offered in terms of behaviour management and personal development in order to enable the pupils to access education. Most pupils are White British and none have English as an additional language. A high proportion of pupils are in the care of their local authority. Pupils live on-site, although a small number go home at weekends. At present there are three pupils who attend school on a daily basis. The school was last inspected by Ofsted in June 2000 and by the CSCI in October 2005.

Key for inspection grades

| | |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Overall effectiveness of the school

The school has been over modest in its judgement. This is supported by the high quality of teaching and learning and the progress pupils make. This is an effective school which is developing well. Learners make good progress. They develop social and independent living skills so that by the time they leave school, they are well equipped to cope with the next step of their education or life. Teaching is consistently good. Learners enjoy school and the celebration of their successes. The quality of care is good and families are well supported. The partnership between the school, its providers and outside agencies ensures that pupils are fully included in beneficial educational and developmental programmes. Information is regularly collected and is used effectively to evaluate pupils' progress. Attainment on entry is well below national expectations. Achievement is good throughout the school. Pupils are provided with a well balanced, relevant range of academic and developmental activities. However, the school has identified a need for more consistent planning and implementation of the mathematics curriculum across the school. As a result of excellent relationships and good teaching, pupils' attitudes to learning and their enthusiasm to succeed are good. This is made possible by the overall good leadership of the school. There is a dedicated staff team who share expertise and experience for the benefit of the school. Resources are effectively managed to secure good value for money. Given the commitment of all staff not to be complacent, the high quality work in the school and how well the school understands what it needs to do, the capacity to improve further is good.

Grade: 2

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Provision in the sixth form is good. Sixth formers make good progress in their development of basic skills. Their gains in work related skills such as decision-making and effective team work equip them well as they leave the safety of the school and enter the adult world of work and further education. A rich curriculum builds up their confidence and self-esteem as they successfully develop essential life skills. Students have success in adult literacy, adult numeracy, mathematics, English, information and communication technology (ICT) and humanities. They learn to shop on their own and cook a healthy meal. They are given space to learn in a safe and secure environment and the quality of care they receive is good.

Grade: 2

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

The last inspection by the CSCI in October 2005 shows good improvement from the previous report. It recognises that almost all of the National Minimum Standards are

satisfactorily met. Since then the school has given good attention to implementing each of the recommendations.

The good procedures for handover at the beginning and end of the day are effective in alerting staff to any difficulties or successes that may affect pupils' attitudes, either to their work in the school or to the way they behave in the residence. Well-established routines and good relationships with care staff ensure that pupils are well cared for, are happy and that the residential provision makes a good contribution to the work of the school. The boarding curriculum is well planned. Pupils take a full part in a wide range of activities that are aimed primarily at developing their personal and social skills and their enjoyment of learning. Older pupils mix freely with younger ones. They are encouraged to participate in a good range of activities within and outside the school such as sporting activities, independent social visits to Ripon or to go along to a local youth club.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure consistent planning and implementation of the mathematics curriculum across the school.

Achievement and standards

The school places great emphasis on giving personal support to pupils and students. From well below average levels of attainment on entry to the school pupils and students make good progress. For many students, attainment has been affected by detrimental and erratic school attendance and disrupted learning at previous schools. Students make good progress because they are taught well, enjoy school and are eager to learn. The targets set for pupils and students in their individual education, behaviour and care plans and as recorded in their progress files are appropriate and challenging. The school has a good database of students' progress as higher attaining students study for unit awards accredited by external examination boards. In addition, the school uses PIVATS (Performance Indicators Value Added Target Setting) to further assess lower attaining students' achievement in more detailed smaller steps. The very small number of girls, students looked after by the local authority, those with additional learning difficulties or more extreme behaviour difficulties do equally well. The school checks on this rigorously as part of its self-evaluation. As students move through the school they develop their key skills well, such as communication, numeracy and ICT. As learners develop in confidence and self-esteem because of the high quality support they receive their social skills improve as does their behaviour. Gains in independence are noticeable. Post-16 students achieve well by participating in activities such as link courses, work experience and preparation for work courses. Year 11 students gain confidence and self-esteem by participating in the Harrogate College Bridge

Project.

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being

The personal development and well-being of students is good. This is a central focus of the school's work and has a very positive impact on students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students enjoy school and attend lessons well. The large number of high quality staff ensures students interact with each other socially and thrive in a safe and healthy environment. Most students take advantage of the 'extended day' activities offered by the school. They behave well and any challenging behaviour which occurs because of their difficulties is managed particularly well and disruption is minimal. This is supported by one pupil who said 'my behaviour has improved so much my mum hardly recognises me when I go home. I have been here five years and enjoyed every minute of it.' Almost all students have very positive attitudes to their work and leisure activities. College placements and work experience along with success in developing basic skills, teamwork skills, self-esteem and confidence prepares students well for their journey through life. Students at post-16 are particularly successful in their work experience. Students are taught what to do if they find themselves in a vulnerable situation and how to make sensible and realistic lifestyle choices. They have a good understanding of being healthy and the school council works effectively. Students have many opportunities to help in the local and wider community such as working to help the Britain in Bloom competition, participating in local amateur dramatics and representing their views on the local youth forum in Ripon.

Grade: 2

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Students are confident learners who achieve well. A short term issue over a shortage in subject teaching in mathematics caused the school to consider its teaching only satisfactory. However, its strengths in settling students with very complex needs to work so readily and consistently points, on balance, to teaching that is effective. Teachers are very positive about their students and expect them to do well. Work set is matched to capabilities so that all students experience challenge and success. During the inspection, teachers and support staff invariably achieved the right balance between pressing on with learning tempered by their knowledge of how students will react to too much pressure. Teachers have sufficient experience to help students develop their reading and writing skills in the manner that best suits

their need. Marking and feedback is on an individual basis and students are told how to improve their work. Examples of writing skills being improved in lessons in history, geography and religious education are displayed in school. A thank you letter to a friend of the school for organising a visit to a local synagogue is one example of staff preparing students well to use their literacy skills in everyday ways. ICT skills are taught well, although the specific subject strengths of this have yet to fully penetrate other curriculum areas.

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that the curriculum is satisfactory overall, and good for the sixth form. Curriculum planning for mathematics, art and design, and design and technology throughout the school is not as fully in place as the school wants it to be. The fact that the school recognises this and is taking steps to improve planning is an effective feature of self-evaluation, and recently implemented plans to improve mathematics is resulting in improved understanding and progress. The sixth form provides students with a good chance to build on opportunities to gain external accreditation of their work. Pupils and students are taught how to keep healthy, sex and relationships education is given in accordance with the school policy, and students are taught about the dangers of smoking, alcohol and drug abuse. The curriculum is enriched by the many opportunities to learn that are provided beyond the school day and which increase students' enjoyment and achievement. Work related learning is effective for pupils and students via college links, work experience placements and community work. Enterprise education is an effective feature of school planning and includes working in teams, planning outings, concerts and organising coffee mornings for local people. This effectively builds students' confidence, independence and economic well-being.

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support

Pupils and students, including the most vulnerable and those with additional educational needs, are well cared for. Good attention is given to ensuring that the school and the residential facility are safe places for pupils and students to live and work. The school takes very seriously its responsibility to ensure all staff are rigorously checked for their suitability to work with children. Statutory requirements for child protection and health and safety are in place and the residential facility meets the National Standards of Care. Relationships between adults and students are excellent. Intervention and support in lessons by teaching assistants is a

significant strength in ensuring that pupils and students gain independence and make good progress in their learning. The school takes good care of all students, who in turn trust staff and know who to approach if they need help. There is very good support for them when they are troubled or upset. Members of the school council were very clear in their views; such as, 'there is no bullying in this school. Any teasing or problems are quickly dealt with by staff.' Good procedures are in place to identify any pupil who needs extra help or support. Monitoring of students' progress and behaviour is a good feature of the school's work. Students with additional learning difficulties and those with more extreme behaviour difficulties receive very well targeted support.

Grade: 2

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. The school's evaluation of this aspect of its work was modest. The impact of actions to improve teaching and learning and pupil achievement is impressive. The headteacher has successfully consolidated her role since becoming permanent. Her strong commitment to promoting the personal development of all students has resulted in a school ethos that is positive and encompasses the principles of 'every child matters'. The headteacher's vision and determination to improve the school, and the support from key staff and governors, have resulted in good provision for the students. As she has gained confidence she has restructured the management team and created new key posts. In a short space of time her actions have resulted in improved subject coordination and pupil achievement. The school is active in seeking, and acting upon, the views of students and parents. Parents are particularly supportive of the school even though many live a great distance away. This is born out by the very positive questionnaires returned to the school with typical comments such as 'all staff are wonderfully caring and committed. My opinion of them is 10/10 with a star as well.' There are good procedures to check the work of the school such as measuring pupil progress both academically and in personal and social development, particularly their emotional and behavioural development. Governance is good. Governors comply fully with Barnardos requirements and give very good support to the school. Through their reflective discussion about all aspects of the school's work, they provide a very good balance of challenge and support, and are quick to act as critical friends when required.

The school has improved since its last inspection, particularly in ICT where equipment, relevant staff training and students' progress have developed well. Consequently, the school is in a good position to make further improvement.

Grade: 2

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Inspection judgements

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| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | School Overall | 16-19 |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

Overall effectiveness

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 | 2 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 2 | 2 |
| The quality and standards in foundation stage | NA | NA |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | Yes | Yes |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes | Yes |

Achievement and standards

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 4 | 4 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 | |

Personal development and well-being

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 | |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 | |
| The attendance of learners | 2 | |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 | |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 2 | |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 | |

The quality of provision

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 2 | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 | 2 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 | 2 |

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 | |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review | 2 | |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 2 | |
| How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 | |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 | |
| The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected | Yes | Yes |

| | |
|---|-----|
| The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy | |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise | Yes |
| Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse | Yes |
| Learners are educated about sexual health | Yes |
| The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe | |
| Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements | Yes |
| Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place | Yes |
| Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism | Yes |
| Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them | Yes |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution | |
| Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships | Yes |
| Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community | Yes |
| The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being | |
| There is provision to promote learners' basic skills | Yes |
| Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams | Yes |
| Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form | Yes |
| Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy | Yes |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know I recently visited you to find out how well your school is helping you with your learning.

Thank you for being so friendly and willing to talk to me. It was useful to know what you think about your school. I did enjoy having lunch with you and listening to some good advice on 'healthy eating' and how much you enjoyed your clubs in school.

There are some things that I think are really good about your school. These are:

- the good progress you make in your work and the enthusiasm you have for your learning
- the excellent relationships you have with adults and the progress you make in your personal development
- how well your headteacher and teachers know you so that they can plan exciting activities and lessons that will challenge you to improve even more
- your parents are happy with the school and all it does for you
- your behaviour is good and you are learning to be safe and have healthy lifestyles.

This is a good school and I have asked the headteacher and teachers to look at improving the way mathematics is taught across the school which would help you make even better progress.