

# The Loddon School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	850/6005
Unique Reference Number	116589
Inspection number	330287
Inspection dates	9 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Sheila Ann Boyle

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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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, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focussed 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

The Loddon School, established as a charitable trust in 1988, is an independent residential special school, which provides year-round care and education for learners from 8 to 19 years. The majority have a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. All have severe to profound learning difficulties, little or no capacity to communicate using language and severe behavioural difficulties. At the time of the inspection there were 27 on roll, 23 males and 4 females. All learners have a statement of special educational needs and are referred by local authorities across the country. The school was last inspected in March 2006. The residential provision is subject to bi-annual inspections by Ofsted, the most recent of which took place in January 2008. The next inspection of the residential provision is scheduled for the week following this inspection. The school aims to provide: *access for all learners to a functional curriculum through Personalised Learning for Life Using Supportive Strategies (PLLUSS) programmes; to teach life skills, and improve learners' self-esteem so that they can achieve as much independence in adult life as possible.*

## Evaluation of the school

The quality of education and care provided at Loddon School is good. The school has maintained the good provision seen at the last inspection. It successfully meets its aims and all of the regulations for registration. The strong links and good relationships that exist between teachers, care staff and other professionals working in the school contribute well to the sense of community and the positive working environment that exists at the school. Provision for learners' spiritual, moral and cultural development is good. Provision for social development is outstanding. Staff are particularly effective in assessing learners' behavioural and social needs and identifying their interests, and this information is used well to produce individualised programmes which help them develop functional skills within the 24 hour curriculum.

## Quality of education

The quality of education is good. The good curriculum is well thought out and effectively planned, and is suitable for the needs and abilities of all learners. There

are suitable schemes of work for the subjects taught. The specialist curriculum is based on the (PLLUSS) model, which supports learners initially to learn functional skills through activities and experiences which they are familiar with and enjoy. This helps them gain confidence so they can extend their learning to new activities and less familiar surroundings. A particular strength is the level of collaboration between the professionals when planning for the needs of individuals. Each learner has three essential areas of learning which encompass long-term academic needs, social and behavioural needs, and personal needs. Each area is broken down into smaller units and included in daily schedules across the 24 hour curriculum. Skills in communication form a major element in each schedule. The staff promote these well through the use of pictures, photographs and signing. However, it is not always clear in the daily schedules which core skills or subject skills are being promoted and therefore the assessment of progress of these in the short-term is not as accurate as it might be. The school is aware of this weakness and has identified this as a priority in its plan for improvement.

Learners' progress in the longer term is assessed through individually written Assessment and Qualification Alliance (AQA) Unit Awards. Each learner is supported by a team with a key worker who is responsible for ensuring the daily implementation of the schedule. Learners are encouraged to carry the materials they will need in a rucksack which teachers prepare at the start of each day. Although classrooms are used as base rooms, much of the learning takes place away from the classroom. It may take place in the grounds, in a therapy room, in the residential setting or off site. The school's good facilities are used well; they include an indoor swimming pool, a large sports hall, an adventure playground, and centres for animals and horticulture. Learners are well prepared for the next stage of learning through the programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE). They make choices at meal times and when they go shopping, and learn how to exchange money for goods chosen. All have the opportunity to feed pigs and groom the horses or help with litter clearance on site or at a local garden centre. Transitional arrangements are good; this was confirmed in the response made by a parent in the questionnaire returns, she wrote, 'Loddon school staff have gone beyond their duty to support my son with transition to his adult placement'.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall. Teachers are skilled in using a good range of alternative means of communication to aid learners' understanding. For example, effective use is made of symbols, signs and photographs and these are presented in a highly structured way. Each learner carries a photo communication book which helps them communicate in different settings. Teachers establish well rehearsed routines to ensure each learner has the opportunity to succeed and build on previous learning. Learners achieve well in communication and in social development, when account is taken of their original starting point. This is born out in a comment made by a parent who attended a review meeting at the school during the inspection. The parent said 'my daughter has made considerable progress in the last three years at Loddon school. She can access many community activities and her behaviour is better each time she comes home'.

Some of the best learning takes place in sessions where staff encourage learners to engage in practical activities such as the work undertaken by individuals in the animal centre. Here, learners take on responsibility for mucking out the pig pens, for grooming and walking the horses and on occasions accompany staff to the merchants store to purchase the animal feed. Others areas where learners excel include the horticultural centre where they plant, water and later harvest vegetables to use in cooking sessions, and in the café where learners assemble for morning and afternoon breaks. Prior to entering the café, each selects a photograph of preferred refreshment which they present to the server. This activity encourages individuals to make choices and communicate as well as waiting their turn and clearing up after the break.

The assessment procedures are good overall and teachers keep accurate records of success against the agreed objectives set. However, progress in academic areas is not always recorded in each session because the planning does not clearly show which academic skills and experiences are being promoted. Overall, learners make good progress. A strength of teaching is the collaboration between teams of staff supporting individuals during the waking day. Whilst mostly used by staff and occasionally by individual learners, the school recognises that information and communication technology (ICT) could be better utilised particularly as many learners respond well to visual stimuli. There are plans to purchase an interactive white board for general use.

### Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good with some outstanding features, notably the provision for social development. Through its specialist curriculum which focuses on functional skills, the school effectively promotes learners' social development by giving them time and opportunities to experience and learn about things that are not previously part of everyday life. For example they engage in role-play and musical activities in assemblies, visit places of interest in the local and wider community and work with staff in the animal and horticultural centre. Here they have the opportunity to learn additional skills including work related activities such as caring for animals, growing and harvesting plants and using tools safely. The personal, social and health education programmes also promotes learners' safety by focusing on their self-esteem and developing their understanding of their emotions.

The development of healthier lifestyles is promoted well through the offer of healthy meals and snacks and through the many physical and sporting activities offered through the waking day. These include swimming, horse riding, structured games, cycling and walking as well as opportunities to work in the animal centre. Learners' enjoyment of school is demonstrated through the pleasure they get from success in these areas. It is clear that they increase in confidence and self-esteem and become more independent as they move through the school. Through the positive behaviour management programme learners gain some understanding of the impact of their behaviour on others. They learn to respect others' personal space, belongings and their need for privacy. Staff know their learners well and have very good

relationships with them. They manage some very challenging behaviour effectively by using a positive reward system. Learners respond well to this approach and their behaviour is generally good, given their complex needs. Learners are presented with an appropriate variety of activities which help them appreciate their own and other cultures. In addition to celebration days where they focus on the cultures and traditions of a particular country they learn about different cultures through music, art and cookery.

## Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

This aspect of the school's provision is good. Staff have been well trained in the most recent safeguarding requirements and there are robust procedures for ensuring that learners are safe in school and when they are off site. The school has effective systems for ensuring that the building is free from the risk of fire. Regular checks are made by the local fire service and twice yearly risk assessments are undertaken by an independent company. The last Ofsted inspection of the residential provision confirmed that the school meets the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. The school fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002. The school has robust recruitment procedures in place to ensure that all staff, including temporary staff, have undergone the necessary checks before commencing work at the school. A central staff register has been compiled in line with the latest statutory requirements. All staff have had the required enhanced checks with the Criminal Records Bureau.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

## 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:

- raise the level of academic achievement of learners by identifying when core skills and specific subject skills are being promoted in learners' daily schedules
- review the systems for assessing and recording these skills and ensure that regular judgements are made against agreed criteria
- increase the use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

## 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 learners		√		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of learners' needs		√		
How well learners make progress in their learning		√		

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		√		
The behaviour of learners		√		

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of learners		√		
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## School details

Name of school	The Loddon School		
DCSF number	850/6005		
Unique reference number	116589		
Type of school	Special		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1988		
Age range of pupils	8-19		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 23	Girls: 4	Total: 27
Number of boarders	Boys: 23	Girls: 4	Total: 27
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 23	Girls: 4	Total: 27
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 23	Girls: 4	Total: 27
Annual fees (day pupils)	£182,000		
Address of school	Wildmoor Sherfield-on-Loddon Hook Hampshire RG27 0JD		
Telephone number	01256 882 394		
Fax number	01256 882 929		
Email address	k.rookes@loddonschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Miss K Rookes		
Proprietor	The Loddon School Company		
Chair of Trustees	Marion Cornick		
Reporting inspector	Sheila Ann Boyle		
Dates of inspection	9 September 2008		