

**Integrated Inspection by the  
Care Commission and  
HM Inspectorate of Education of  
Ochil Tower School  
Auchterarder**

**7 July 2004**

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# **Integrated Inspection by the Care Commission and HM Inspectorate of Education of Ochil Tower School Auchterarder**

## **1. Introduction**

The inspection of Ochil Tower School took place in February 2004 as part of the programme of integrated inspections of residential schools by the Care Commission and HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE). It was one of the twice-yearly inspections which are undertaken by the Care Commission. It also served as a follow-through inspection to the report on the school, published in June 2003, by HMIE.

The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages, including the school's environment, care and protection, support for young people, educational provision and management. Care Commission Officers and HM Inspectors gave particular attention to selected national care standards and quality indicators. As part of the inspection process, they issued questionnaires to parents or carers and listened carefully to the views of young people, managers, and care and teaching staff. They provided oral feedback to the school's senior management on the standards and quality of the work of the school.

An evaluative summary by HMIE regarding the response of the Council of Management and school to the inspection report of June 2002 is given in the Appendix.

## **2. The school**

Ochil Tower School in Auchterarder provides primary and secondary education and residential care for pupils with a wide range of additional support needs. Almost all pupils had been placed in the school by local authorities, usually jointly by both education and social work departments. All pupils had a Record of Needs. At the time of the inspection, 39 pupils attended the school. Of

these 14 were day pupils and 25 attended on a residential basis.

The work of the school is based on the educational philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, which was adapted by Karl König, the founder of the Camphill movement, to address the needs of children with special educational needs. The approach is called *curative education* and is practised in a network of schools world-wide. Under curative education, children's special educational needs are addressed through complementary programmes of social care, education and therapy.

### **3. The school's environment**

The school was located within its own extensive and attractive grounds in the centre of Auchterarder. The five residential houses provided homely and comfortable accommodation and all but two of the children and young people had their own single bedrooms. Children were encouraged, and given support, to personalise their rooms. The school made very good use of individual 'safe places' and had created a special living area for pupils at risk from self-harm. Living areas, including kitchens and dining areas, were of a good standard. Staff and pupils benefited from the school's accessibility to the local town services. The school should provide appropriate signage to direct visitors to the school office and put in writing its risk assessments of the premises.

The school provided good facilities for education. There was an appropriate number of purpose-built classrooms, a large assembly hall, a number of small tutorial rooms, craft workshops and a therapy room. Some of the craft rooms and classrooms were beginning to show signs of age. However, as part of its commitment to updating and improving its accommodation, the school had plans to develop a new classroom area. Staff made excellent use of the extensive grounds for practical gardening and animal husbandry tasks. The school had recently purchased a number of up-to-date resources for teaching language and mathematics. These were housed in the newly-created teachers' resource room. The school was well equipped with a wide range of information and communications technology (ICT) equipment.

## **4. Care and protection**

The school provided a high standard of care and protection for children and young people. Relationships were warm, mutually respectful and supportive. Staff were aware of children and young people's individual needs and responded appropriately to these. The high ratio of adults to children and young people ensured that there was good supervision in both care and education. Pupils generally behaved well and any instances of misbehaviour were usually attributable to their special educational needs. The school had a useful approach to consequences which could result from any deliberate misbehaviour. There were very clear policies and procedures on child protection, absconding and the use of restraint. The school had recently adopted a new approach to crisis prevention and intervention. Records indicated that physical restraint was rarely used. Some further attention to details of recording would add clarity. The school should further develop its approaches to risk assessment at the point of admission to highlight any issues which would affect the use of restraint in respect of individual pupils.

Climate and relationships within the classrooms and teaching areas were very good. Staff and pupils interacted very well with each other, and teachers and co-workers made very good use of praise to motivate and encourage pupils to give of their best. The school's assemblies at the beginning and end of the week provided excellent opportunities for the staff and pupils to come together as a community, to celebrate success and to worship. Senior pupils were given appropriate opportunities to be involved in decision making. The school had developed a clear and useful policy on the safe use of the Internet.

## **5. Support arrangements**

The very close working relationships among care and education staff ensured that the individual needs of children and young people were recognised and supported. All pupils had well-linked care and education plans and staff had a good understanding of their particular needs. The school held regular reviews of each pupil's placement and care plans. It involved parents, carers and other agency workers appropriately in reviews of the care and education plans. Staff should develop more systematic means of recording risk assessments

relating to individual pupils for ongoing planning and review.

The school met pupils' needs very well. Staff made very good use of information from previous placements to prepare individualised educational programmes (IEPs) containing appropriate long- and short-term targets. Class teachers planned well for each pupil's individual targets. Staff had a good knowledge of pupils' special educational needs and supported them well in setting classroom tasks which were appropriately challenging. Some pupils attended the local secondary school to maximise opportunities for educational challenge. The school made very good use of advice from a speech and language therapist on the use of signs and symbols to communicate. This was particularly useful for a number of pupils who required alternative forms of communication. Staff made good use of ICT to support pupils' learning and a few pupils had use of their own laptop computers.

Although the school held regular reviews of pupils' learning needs, a small number of Records of Needs had not been updated recently. The school was aware of the need to remind education authorities that Records required to be updated.

Almost all pupils were making very good progress in developing self-esteem and self-confidence. The relaxed family atmosphere in the school contributed to the development of pupils' personal and social skills. The school made good use of the services in the local town and in Perth to promote pupils' independence. Pupils making independent journeys were well supervised and risks were appropriately assessed. The school informed pupils about personal safety and senior pupils were taught about personal relationships. The school should look for opportunities to teach younger pupils about sexual health and making appropriate choices in personal relationships.

## **6. Supporting pupils' education**

The school provided an educationally rich environment for its young people. Care and education staff were committed to working together to support pupils' educational development. Care staff worked as classroom assistants and supported pupils in their classroom activities. Weekly house meetings and

teachers' meetings ensured that all members of the school community were kept up-to-date on information concerning individuals. Residences had a good supply of books and pupils were encouraged to use the local library.

The school provided a broad and balanced curriculum appropriate to the individual needs of its pupils. The school day was well structured and teachers planned well for class lessons and for pupils' individual work. Teachers had worked well to dovetail the standard principles of the Steiner curriculum with 5-14 programmes and the National Qualifications (NQ) framework. The school had good links with the local high school and with local colleges to meet the needs of its older pupils. It had introduced a good range of NQ units at Access level. It should continue to develop units at this level and, in doing so, ensure that it provides age-appropriate educational contexts for older pupils.

## **7. Management**

The senior co-workers had a clear vision for the school and for its future development. They managed the school well through a number of clearly defined sub-committees which were accountable to the whole school community and to the external Council of Management. The senior co-workers provided good leadership to new staff who were provided with a well-planned induction to the school. Co-workers received regular supervision in residential situations. This needed to be extended to cover classrooms as well. The school had a commitment to ensure that all workers could achieve recognised qualifications. Permanent workers had opportunities to study for a degree in curative education at the University of Aberdeen or for a social work diploma through the Open University.

The school had good approaches to planning for improvement. It had prepared a clear action plan to meet the main points for action contained in the previous report by HMIE. The school made very good use of a range of surveys to gauge the opinions of parents, carers, other professionals and the local community. Teaching staff had begun to use quality indicators to evaluate their practice. However, they needed to use quality indicators in a more systematic way. The school had not yet fully implemented its plans to monitor learning and teaching.

## **8. Key strengths**

- The very good use of the attractive school grounds for educational activities.
- The school's very good ethos.
- The commitment of the staff in meeting pupils' individual needs.
- The wide range of experiences to encourage the development of young people's self-confidence and self-esteem.
- The commitment and high quality team work of all members of the Ochil Tower community.
- The outward-looking vision of the school in ensuring that it had links with mainstream schools and colleges.

## **9. Main points for action**

### **Recommendations for improvement**

- The school should improve signage in its grounds to direct visitors to the school office. It should continue with its plans to improve accessibility within the premises.
- The school should put its risk assessments of the premises in writing and refine its procedures for recording, including risk assessments in relation to individual pupils.
- The school, in conjunction with education authorities, should ensure that the Records of Needs of all pupils are kept up-to-date.
- The school should develop its programmes on sexual health and personal relationships for younger pupils.
- Teachers should continue to develop courses within the National Qualifications framework and improve opportunities for certification by senior pupils.

- The school should ensure that it carries out regular supervision of all staff and that full records are kept of supervision.
- The school should implement its plans to monitor the quality of learning and teaching.

**Requirements  
relating to Scottish  
Statutory  
Instruments (SSI)**

There were no immediate requirements for the school to implement.

Care Commission Officers and HM Inspectors have asked the school and Council of Management to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report. The action plan will be available to parents and carers. In liaison with the school and Council of Management, Care Commission Officers and HM Inspectors will monitor progress to ensure improvements in line with the main findings of the report.

Rachel Gillespie  
Care Commission Officer

Morag Gunion  
HM Inspector

7 July 2004

## **Appendix: Evaluative summary by HMIE regarding the response of the Council of Management and school to the inspection report of June 2002**

*The school should improve the quality, organisation and use of educational resources.*

The school had made good progress towards meeting this main point for action. It had a new educational resources room and had purchased new teaching resources for primary-aged pupils.

*The programmes for communication and English language, numeracy and mathematics, and environmental studies should be improved, to take account of the points raised in this report.*

The school had made good progress with this main point for action. Teachers used 5-14 planning grids for class activities and for individual pupils.

*Teachers' planning and approaches to teaching should be improved. Plans should clearly focus on learning outcomes for individuals and groups.*

The school had made good progress with this main point for action. All pupils had IEPs with clear long- and short-term targets and teachers planned well to meet these targets.

*Assessment and recording procedures should be improved at all stages.*

The school had made good progress with this main point for action. Teachers had developed clear procedures to assess and record pupils' progress.

*The Council of Management and school should work together to improve the effectiveness of staff and procedures for staff development and review. They should develop a more rigorous system for monitoring and reporting on the quality of learning and teaching with a view to improvement.*

The school had made some progress towards meeting this main point for action. Initial plans to observe learning and teaching and to supervise co-workers in classroom activities had not been carried through due to staff changes.

## Summary information

The Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act, 2001, requires that the Care Commission inspects all care services to monitor the quality of care provided. In accordance with the Act, the Care Commission and HM Inspectorate of Education carry out integrated inspections of the quality of care and education. In doing this, inspection teams take account of *National Care Standards* and HMIE quality indicators in *How good is our school?*. The following standards and related quality indicators were used in the recent inspection.

National Care Standard	How good is our school?
Standard 3 – Care and protection	Climate and relationships
Standard 5 – Comfort, safety and security	Accommodation and facilities
Standard 6 – Support arrangements	Meeting pupils’ needs Personal and social development
Standard 7 – Management and staffing	Planning for improvement
Standard 14 – Supporting your education	Structure of the curriculum

Evaluations made using HMIE quality indicators use the following scale to describe the team’s judgements:

Very good	:	major strengths
Good	:	strengths outweigh weaknesses
Fair	:	some important weaknesses
Unsatisfactory	:	major weaknesses

Reports contain recommendations which are intended to support improvements in the quality of service.

Any requirements refer to actions which must be taken by service providers to ensure that regulations are met and there is compliance with relevant legislation. In these cases the regulation(s) to which requirements refer will be notified clearly and timescales given.

### Quality indicator summary table

‘How good is our school?’ Quality Indicator	Evaluation
Accommodation and facilities	Good
Climate and relationships	Very good
Meeting pupils’ needs	Very good
Personal and social development	Very good
Structure of the curriculum	Good
Planning for improvement	Good

## How you can contact us

Copies of this report have been sent to parents, the Council of Management, senior co-workers, staff, appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament and authorities placing pupils in the school. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from the offices at the addresses below or by telephoning 0131 244 0619. Copies are also available on the Care Commission web site: [www.carecommission.com](http://www.carecommission.com) and the HMIE web site: [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk)

Should you wish to comment on or make a complaint about any aspect of the inspection or about this report you should write either to the Care Commission or to HM Inspectorate of Education at the address below. If you are still dissatisfied with our services, you can contact your member of the Scottish Parliament (or, if you prefer, any other MSP). You can also contact the Scottish Parliamentary Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies.

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