

Charlton School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Alison Spreadbridge
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

The school is situated in Charlton in London, close to all main services. The boarding unit is sited within the main school, offering a small, comfortable home for eight pupils. With additional garden and play areas. In the evening the children have the use of some of the school facilities such as the swimming pool, library and IT suite, as well as going out into the community to visit the cinema, youth clubs and other local activities.

Summary

The annual inspection took place over ten hours on an ordinary school day. There were seven children staying in the boarding unit at the time of the inspection. The inspector sat with the children at breakfast and at lunch time, and for a time after school. During the inspection the head teacher, head of care, chair of governors, the children and some staff were spoken with. Some of the parents had also returned the pre-inspection questionnaires. A tour of the building was made, some documentation and policies and procedures were seen.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

The school is currently going through a major reconstruction which the head teacher hopes will be completed by the middle of the autumn term. The unit has recently been redecorated and offers the children a bright and airy space in which to live. The new conservatory is in full use and offers a comfortable sitting area in which to watch the new plasma television, or watch a selection of DVDs. Outside there is a space with tables and chairs in which the children can enjoy the sensory garden and have easy access to the all weather play area.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The children are assessed prior to staying in the unit. They can stay in the unit for between one and four nights a week. The unit has been redecorated and is bright and airy. The children are required to share a bedroom. The staff ensure the children's changing health needs are well monitored and maintained. There are sufficient staff in the unit to meet the assessed needs of the children. The staff on duty in the unit work split shifts so they go off duty while the children are in school. There were four staff on duty in the unit at the time of the inspection. The children are also well supported by nurses on duty. They work throughout the twenty four hour period which is reassuring to parents, staff and children. The medical room is well equipped to meet the children's needs. Medication storage and recording was found to be correct. The nurse have a formal handover from the day to the night cover. The families are required to provide the school with sufficient medication for the term. The children remain registered with their own G.P.s. The children are seen annually by the school's paediatrician which feeds into their LAC reviews. The children would benefit however from the additional facility of a rest room where they could sleep for short periods as their medical needs change but they do not require their missing school. The children are getting older and the issue of privacy screening in shared rooms does need addressing. The children spoken to knew who their key workers were and obviously had a good relationship with them. The key workers support the children in their reviews and liaise with their parents. The children and staff have the additional support

of speech and physiotherapists. Staff are trained to carry out the feeding, speech and physiotherapy programmes identified for the individual children in their care.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The safety and well being of the children in the school is clearly of paramount importance to the staff. The children have the benefit of being cared for by a committed stable staff team who have been together for some time. The rooms are shared and staff said that care is taken to assess the suitability of the children who share. The placement plans contained all of the required information under schedule two of the Children's Act. Some of the information in the files is in need of updating to ensure they keep up to date with the changing needs of the children. The children's placement plans are kept in a corner of the dining room which is also a communal space. The head of care said they had been moved to what she considered a more appropriate place following the last inspection. The advice remains the same, files must be kept in a secure place at all times. The children enjoy the security of safe school boundaries, the unit has a keypad at the entrance, and security cameras are also used on the premises. Staff are receiving regular training in child protection, moving and handling, health and safety. If children are expected to come to the unit and have a health need that is new to staff, then staff said training is provided before the child starts at the school. The staff said they felt well supported by their manager. Fire safety is being maintained. The fire alarm was tested during the inspection. It was noted that the last fire drill took place in March 2007. There was also a report that a problem with the conservatory door had delayed the evacuation in December 2006. This problem has still not been resolved. Regular practices would ensure the children were not frightened by the noise and activity. It is important that while the building works are taking place fire safety standards are maintained in the unit.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The children enjoy a wide range of after school activities when staying in the unit. They are encouraged and supported to do as much for themselves as they can. The children spoken to said how much they liked staying at the school and being with their friends. They particularly liked the swimming, scouts and shopping trips. They also enjoy the walks in the park and the picnics. The children are encouraged to join in the weekly house meetings and help choose the activities for the week. They have a number of activities available indoors including a large screened TV, DVDs, music, games, a play station as well as the use of some of the amenities in school such as the swimming pool, sensory room and IT suite. The children also have sensory equipment in their bedrooms if they want to spend some quiet time on their own. The children are supported by a dedicated staff team who know them all well. The staff said they help them to develop some life skills by supporting them to make their own beds and tidy their rooms. They also help them in the evenings with any homework. They have the use of the newly modernised kitchen once the evening chef has finished cooking their supper. Staff said they are waiting for an adjustable work-surface to be put in so those in wheelchairs can take more part in the activities. The staff in the unit work closely with the school staff to ensure any relevant information is passed on to the staff on duty to ensure the children get the most out of their stay at school.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The children are consulted about their views, needs and wishes. They have a house meeting every week when they talk about any concerns and choose the week's after-school activities. The children were seen to have a very respectful and positive relationship with the staff. The staff were very clearly responsive to the needs of the children. They have a good working relationship with each other which ensure the children get the best out of their stay in the unit. Positive praise was used and clear boundaries were being set. The incidents book was seen to be rarely used. The children stay at the school from Monday morning until Friday afternoon when they go home to their parents for the weekend. The parental survey showed that parents were very pleased with the care and support they and their children are getting from the school. None of the children was seen to be hurried. Time was given to allow them to communicate their needs. Some of the children use speech and others use signing. All staff were seen to be able to communicate with the children using some basic signing skills. The staff and children were able to joke with each other and act as a family group. The children are assisted to enter and leave the school in a planned way, work is already well underway for those coming to the school in September and for those getting ready to leave. Some of the children were able to speak about the plans being made for their further education.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The children live in a spacious and comfortable home, with direct access to a sensory garden and play area. They are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms and to bring along personal items to make them feel at home. The new conservatory provides a nice comfortable sitting area with TV, DVDs and a play station. The staff ensure the children enjoy their stay and have activities they like. The children are encouraged to help choose the activities for the week. They are able to attend a local youth club and some of the children were preparing to go to one after they their evening meal. The children change out of their school uniforms and can wear their own clothes. Some of the girls had changed ready to go to the youth club. They were seen to be suitably dressed as befits any young teenager. The children said they like to choose their own clothes from their wardrobes. In the evenings the unit staff have access to the schools transport and so are able to take the children on outings. The children have pocket money available to them for the week. On auditing the money a discrepancy was found. The head of care said they she would investigate and ensure the shortfall was found or replaced. The children's money is kept securely and all of the children have a lockable facility in their rooms.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The school is being well managed and the children benefit from a very dedicated staff team. The parent and families are also well informed and supported by the units staff. The staff send a weekly news sheet home with the children, which show what the children have been doing and any issues that may have arisen during the school week that parents should be made aware of. The parents are very happy with the care the children receive at school as was evidenced by the parents survey forms received as part of the inspection. The staff ratio is very good. There are four staff on duty during the day with two wake and two sleeping staff at night. This

ensures the children's assessed needs are being met and there are sufficient staff for evening activities to take place. The children benefit from the units very stable team. Staff training is taking place on a regular basis with some staff undertaking NVQ qualifications at level 3. The head of care has also completed her NVQ in care at level 4. The Chair of Governors was spoken to during the inspection, he said that he and the head teacher have a very good working relationship. They have regular meetings about the vision for the school. One of the governors is responsible for the monitoring visits made to the boarding unit twice a term. Written reports are prepared and fed back to the head teacher, head of care and all of the school governing body. The matter of the fire precautions was discussed with the head teacher and the need to ensure the current building works do not in anyway affect the fire precautions in the boarding house.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
3	ensure the children's placement plans are kept securely	31 July 2007
26	must ensure that the building can be evacuated safely and quickly in the event of a fire. Also that any changes made during the rebuild do not effect the fire precautions in the boarding house.	31 July 2007
16	ensure that money held by the unit is managed and audited on a regular basis.	31 July 2007

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- that privacy screening is provided in the shared rooms
- that a sick room is provided to meet the changing health needs of the children and provide a short term sleeping facility for daytime use.
- ensure staff read the units policies and procedures as part of their induction and that they sign to say they have read them.
- is advised that the home's Statement of Purpose should be revised inline with the changing population in the school.

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for residential special school

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted (NMS 14)
- children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs (NMS 15)

Ofsted considers 14 the key standard to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled (NMS 3)
- children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration (NMS 4)
- the welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse (NMS 5)
- children are protected from bullying (NMS 6)
- all significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified to the appropriate authorities by the head of the school or designated person (NMS 7)
- children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return (NMS 8)
- children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour (NMS 10)
- children live in schools that provide physical safety and security (NMS 26)
- there is careful selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers (NMS 27)

Ofsted considers 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 26 and 27 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school (NMS 12)
- children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities within the school and in the local community (NMS 13)
- children receive individual support when they need it (NMS 22)

Ofsted considers 12 and 22 the key standards to be inspected.

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run; no child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views (NMS 2)
- children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect (NMS 9)
- children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes (NMS 11)

- children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school (NMS 17)
- in accordance with their wishes children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while at school (NMS 20)

Ofsted considers 2, 17 and 20 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children can wear their own clothing outside school time, can secure personal requisites and stationery while at school, and are helped to look after their own money (NMS 16)
- children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living (NMS 21)
- children live in well designed and pleasant premises, which provide sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs
- children live in accommodation which is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use (NMS 24)
- children are able to carry out their personal care in privacy and with dignity (NMS 25)

Ofsted considers the key standard to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils (NMS 1)
- children's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions (NMS 18)
- there are adequate records of the staff and child groups of the school (NMS 19)
- children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently (NMS 28)
- children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs (NMS 29)
- children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare (NMS 30)
- children receive the care and services they need from competent staff (NMS 31)
- children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools (NMS 32)
- the governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school (NMS 33)

Ofsted considers 1, 28, 31 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.