

Springfields School

Inspection report for residential special school

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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

Springfields is a Specialist Sports College and Local Education Authority School with residential accommodation for 68 young people of mixed gender, ranging in age from 10 to 17 years. It accommodates young people primarily from Wiltshire, although some 14% are currently from other counties. All of the young people have been statemented as a result of emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties. Currently boys outnumber girls at the school, with the latter accounting for approximately eight percent of the student population. Springfields school has had specialist sports college status since September 2005 and its second specialism is in Information and Communication Technology. The school's ethos is based upon cognitive behavioural therapy and aims to help the young people recognise the causes and triggers of their behaviour, and so provide opportunities for them to realise their full potential both academically and socially. It also provides tuition in externally credited vocational areas for up to 350 students from 18 mainstream and special schools, and has an 'emotional literacy' centre which is attended by younger students on a part time basis. The school does not admit day pupils, however mid-week home visits provide a degree of flexibility in meeting the needs of some young people. All young people return home at weekends and at holidays. The school lies within ten acres of gardens. There are three mini football pitches, a full size football pitch, basketball, netball and tennis courts and a junior sized rugby pitch. There is a hydrotherapy pool, gymnasium and weight training room.

Summary

The inspection was conducted by two inspectors over a period of three days. The inspectors were able to interview staff including the head and deputy head teacher, head of care, bursar, residential and teaching staff, the school's matron, catering and maintenance personnel. Inspectors also held informal meetings with groups of variously aged young people, met with the school council and joined the young people for breakfast, lunch and supper. Inspectors had access to all residential units and to the school grounds. The inspectors had access to policies and logs, case files and personnel records. As part of the inspection process students were offered the opportunity to anonymously complete pre-inspection questionnaires, with 45 questionnaires received by inspectors. In addition, 21 questionnaires were received from parents or carers, social workers, school staff, school governors and from schools with which Springfields is involved. Inspectors were also invited to a stakeholder lunch. Judgements contained in this report are made from evidence obtained from pre-inspection material, from that gathered during the inspection and take into account the views and experience of the young people using the service.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The following recommended actions, detailed in the inspection report of June 2006 are considered to have been met in the inspection period: The school ensures that all incidents of physical intervention are entered in the school's bound and numbered log within 24 hours. Young people are encouraged to write or otherwise have their views recorded on the use of the physical intervention. The school ensures that young people, staff and visitors are safe from risk of fire and other hazards, in accordance with Health and Safety and Fire Legislation

and guidance. The school ensures that all bathroom and toilet doors provide external access in the event of an emergency. The school understands that Criminal Record Bureau checks are to be at an enhanced level and are to be obtained on all care staff before employment commences. It is noted that the school has obtained a Healthy Schools Award.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The inspection report of June 2006 notes that an application for the national Healthy Schools Award had been made. This award has now been obtained. Its focus includes the student's diet and exercise programme. Chips feature on the school's menu on a maximum of one occasion per week, student's water bottles have been replaced by water fountains around the school and fresh fruit is observed in both the school's dining room and in residential units. Exercise, sport and physical education take place throughout the day, with participation in various sporting activities during curriculum time further augmenting optional activities held in the residential units in the evenings. The school also plays a key role in the Wales and South West Special Schools Sports Federation, and residential courses held by the school allow for participation in outdoor and adventurous activities. The Healthy Body and Healthy Mind ethos of the award, is further evident in the school's approach taken to the prevention of bullying, which is detailed below. The MEND programme (Mind, Exercise, Nutrition, Do-it) which is delivered by an external agency to students under 14 years of age, also educates young people in the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Lessons in Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) deliver information on personal relationships and the physical aspects of sexual relationships, safe sex, and sexually transmitted disease. All students attend a 'Dangers of Smoking' session, with its message further reinforced by PSHE lessons and the school's non-smoking policy. As previously reported a rolling menu is not employed by the school, with students continuing to be involved in menu planning via the school council. A review of menus indicates that a vegetarian meal is provided as an alternative lunch, and that salads and fresh fruit are routinely offered. Yogurt and fruit juice are occasionally available at breakfast. Discussion with various groups of young people confirms that meals are good, that amounts are more than adequate and that second helpings are always available. A social worker also comments on the excellent healthy eating policy of the school. However, some parents comment on the availability of sweets, 'E numbers' and fizzy drinks provided by the school's Tuck shop. In addition to a food handling code, a child protection aide memoir is found on the notice board of the kitchen. It is considered good practice. Kitchen staff report training in child protection procedures, food handling and fire prevention. A fire blanket is observed in the kitchen. Evidence is also seen of the daily checking of fridge and freezer temperatures. The recording of the administration of medication is in large part satisfactory, although it is noted that school's policy of June 2007 is not followed on every occasion, and two staff have not always signed the administration of every medicine. In all residential units medication is stored in a locked facility, although controlled drugs are not stored in a double locked cabinet. In the reporting period the role of the school matron has been adjusted. Although continuing as a matron in the morning, the school nurse reports undertaking further training in counselling and is therefore able to support the school's current counsellor whose hours of employment have been increased. As of September 2007 the school is also to participate in an advocacy scheme via the Wiltshire Children's Rights Service, and is to employ an independent visitor who will visit the school on one occasion each week. However, the school continues to report insufficient funding to ensure a range of specialist therapy, and that the needs of some young people currently exceed the school's ability to provide for same. The proposed employment of a Pastoral Support Worker

with responsibility for setting up a number of parenting groups, detailed in the inspection report of June 2006, did not proceed.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The bound and numbered complaints log indicates that one complaint has been entered in the reporting period. It has been appropriately investigated by the school. Discussion with various groups of students confirms that they know how to make a complaint and that they feel confident in discussing issues with staff. Copies of the complaints procedure are displayed in residential units. Seven child protection referrals have been made in the reporting period. All are appropriately addressed and documented. Evidence is also available to indicate that the log is regularly monitored by both head teacher and a school governor. The school also records that its child protection procedures comply with the requirements of the local authority, Wiltshire Child Protection Officer guidelines and with local Area Child Protection Committee arrangements. It is noted that a school questionnaire conducted in February 2007, reports that 100% of students agree or strongly agree that the school is a safe place to live. Child friendly anti-bullying posters are displayed on notice boards in each residential unit. Although many students report that bullying does exist, it is considered to be promptly addressed by staff. The school's reported zero tolerance of bullying, is also acknowledged. Staff report that bullying is discussed with the students at the beginning of each term, that it is a topic of school assemblies and that a 'Bully Slip' system allows students to anonymously report incidents. Surveys, which are seen as good practice, are conducted by the school each term and involve all students, allowing for the identification of potential bullies and victims. The surveys also assist the school in determining whether progress in addressing specific issues is successful. Parents of students are invited to assist the school in working through individually identified issues. Details reported by bullying incident forms are entered into both the school's Bully and Incident Log. As previously reported residential provision at the school consists of four progressive and sequential units, with movement between them requiring a sustained period of appropriate behaviour, but generating in turn greater freedom and privileges. A behaviour and care plan based on the 'Every Child Matters' agenda, is drawn up six to eight weeks after the arrival of the student, with behaviour tracked against targets and measured in points recorded on a Behaviour Attainment System. Progress in the realisation of targets is monitored by the school and students are encouraged to self evaluate their progress. Weekly incentives such as 'Pupil of the week' reward appropriate behaviour. Also facilitating improvement in behaviour is an emphasis on emotional intelligence which aims to empower, developing student's confidence and responsibility and helping them to develop relationships with others. The combined impact of the approach is seen as positive; parents report feeling supported and number of absconsions from the school have decreased. Unit managers also report that damage in units is now minimal and that grafitti is largely absent from the school. Inspectors too sense a growing maturity in the students. The physical restraints log was reviewed with 84 interventions recorded in the reporting period. In most part the log has been fully and appropriately completed. There is also evidence of six monthly monitoring of the log by school governors. A two day Team Teach training programme, which emphasises de-escalation skills, has been undertaken in the reporting period. During the course of the inspection one student expressed concern about the way in which restraint had been practiced. The account of the restraint was reviewed, but entries in the log did not confirm the method of restraint described by the student. The concern was however discussed with the member of staff, and improvements in the recording of restraint discussed with the head teacher. With the head teacher reporting that all incidents of physical intervention are now entered into the log, the recommended action made by the inspection report of June 2006 is considered to have been met. The sanctions log for the various units was reviewed. They are bound, pages are numbered and contain appropriate information. Sanctions are imposed by the school for a variety of unacceptable behaviours, but their form and use is considered appropriate. The logs also include the occasional student comment, for example 'I deserved the sanctions, I was annoyed at this school'. Evidence is also present to indicate regular monitoring of the log by the head teacher. The absconsion log was reviewed. With nine absonsions detailed in the reporting period, the number of reported absoncions has decreased over that recorded by the report of June 2006. Evidence of the monitoring of this log by the head teacher is present. In the reporting period a health and safety audit of the school has been completed. Evidence is also available to confirm that the school's two central heating boilers were serviced 29.01.07 and that PAT testing of electrical items are undertaken, although a backlog of work in this area is noted. Evidence is also available to confirm that monthly checks are made by contracted engineers in regard to the risk posed by legionella. Documentation sampled by an inspector suggests that the school's vehicles have relevant insurance, MOT documentation and that they have been appropriately serviced. As noted elsewhere the school's caretaker has completed the Fire Marshall's training course. Staff also report that they have received fire prevention training, which is conducted on an annual basis by an external agency. Instruction is provided to all students at beginning of term and evacuation drills, including a night time evacuation, occurs each term. However, evidence to indicate which staff have been involved in fire drills is not available, and this, along with the need to establish a separate fire log for each residential units has been discussed. Evidence, however, is available to confirm that tests of emergency lighting and fire alarms are conducted appropriately and that fire equipment and fire escapes are routinely checked. A fire risk assessment of school buildings was last undertaken 08.06.05. No new care staff have been appointed in the inspection period. Two teaching assistants commenced employment before receipt of their Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. However, in line with the policy of the local education authority, both staff are reported to have been closely supervised prior to receipt of their CRB check. The head teacher confirms that all CRBs are at an enhanced level and are to be renewed every five years.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

As a specialist Sports College the school continues to offer students a very wide range of sporting activities including hockey, archery, football, ultimate Frisbee, golf, climbing, skate boarding and canoeing. The swimming pool of a local school also allows the school to teach lifesaving techniques, enabling students to obtain a lifesaving qualification. With Information and Communication Technology (ICT) a second specialist subject, the school reports purchasing a variety of equipment and software in the reporting period, with interactive whiteboards or digital projectors now in most classrooms. The effects of enhanced ICT provision with increased use of multi media and interactive tools, are reported to include better engagement of students in lessons and a reduction in numbers of students out of class. Staff also report that ICT is increasingly used in physical education. The school also provides a number of vocational opportunities such as catering, motor vehicle maintenance, building and construction, sport and hair and beauty. Risk assessments have been established for activities undertaken both on and off campus and both the activity and person specific assessments are considered appropriate. Partnership schools report that Springfields' ensures the safety of students, and that all understand fire safety practises and the health and safety procedures relevant to the activities they are participating in. With a Sports College status, the school is required to make its external facilities available to the wider community and it is reported that on approximately 50% of weekends a variety of activities take place at the school, including archery, guad bikes, cricket, football and tag rugby. With the success of the school's sports college bid, it has been able to improve its sporting environment enlarging the gym, renewing flooring and providing additional equipment. Although male students continue to outnumber female students, the school remains sensitive to this and continues to offer a 'Girls Night' on one night per week. Parents and social workers note the encouragement and praise that young people receive at the school. Parents also report on the growing academic and social confidence of their young people. The work of the Springfield's Emotional Literacy centre (SpEL) continues. The centre helps students from local schools who have been identified as being emotionally and socially immature, to succeed in mainstream facilities. The centre focuses attention on the younger student. As previously recorded, some students continue to help with basketball and football tuition in local primary schools. This not only helps to raise participation rates in physical education in the primary school but promotes a sense of responsibility in the students involved. Schools with which Springfields is involved, describe their relationship as strong. The school reports good community contacts encouraged by the life skills programme. Students have raised money for local charities and have regular contact with local elderly peoples homes, hosting evenings of entertainment for them. Two students are also members of the local town's Youth Council. At events hosted by the school, it is reported that students take responsibility for welcoming visitors for overseeing car parking and are involved in catering and the serving of meals.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Staff who were spoken with confirm that students are given every opportunity to express their views and opinions on how the units are run, and various meetings and forums have been established to facilitate this, including participation meetings with the Head teacher and other senior staff, house meetings and one to one tutorials. It is also reported that students are actively involved in the recruitment of new staff to the school. The school council also continues to operate and meets regularly, having sought the views of other students on issues under consideration. The council has been reportedly instrumental in securing new cricket nets and water fountains, and has been involved in helping to reduce graffiti about the school. Students report that they maintain contact with their home either by phone, overnight visits, or that parents visit them. Staff report that they seek and encourage feedback and comments from parents and carers in a variety of ways, including the use of home-school diaries, through student reviews and open days. Students and their parents are also encouraged to complete a school questionnaire on life at the school, with results of the questionnaire published in the school's newsletter. A questionnaire completed in February 2007, reports that 92% of participating parents/carers agreed or agreed strongly that students show progress in their behaviour. The views of the wider community are also sought through regular meetings with the local anti-social behaviour team, which is responsible for the town's strategy on providing facilities for young people. Social workers report that the school is viewed positively by the local community. Again, and as previously reported, the quality of the relationships between staff and students continues to be one of the real strengths of the school. From group discussions, students report that staff actively help them to improve their behaviour and are supportive and confident in the way in which they deal with student issues. As one student reports '(it is) the best school I have been to'. Another describes the school as a 'second home'. Parents too report finding staff easy to communicate with, helpful and open, and that staff act as positive role models for the students. The personal files of four students were reviewed

and found to be comprehensive in content, although the admission sheet in two files was either missing or incomplete. All files contain a formal written agreement between the school and the student regarding appropriate behaviour. There is also written evidence in one file indicating that the student has had the school's complaints procedure explained. All files contain individual risk assessments of behaviour in addition to a risk management strategy. No evidence of a review of the risk assessment was presented however in one instance. Incident and physical intervention forms found in the files are appropriately completed, and details of the incident are also found in relevant logs. A personal education plan that identifies educational targets and strategies is found in all files, and where appropriate a Connexions action plan is also included. There is evidence of a regular review of academic progress. Individual care plans, that also show evidence of regular review, are detailed and cover a range of areas. The plans note specific problems and identify target objectives, action to be taken and the staff member responsible for implementation. Updated pen pictures of the students attempt to capture impact of the above. Each student has a separate file for the recording of daily events.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Areas identified in the inspection report of June 2006 as requiring attention, have received same. For example, locks to toilets and bathrooms that prevent external access in the event of an emergency have now been replaced. Other initiatives which were noted as planned have been implemented, including the installation of a hydrotherapy pool and the redecoration of the dining room. A second small dining room has also been created in the reporting period. Other changes to the environment which were observed during a tour of residential units include, the introduction of new beds and bedside cabinets throughout the residential units together with the installation of new carpets and flooring. Phoenix unit has been divided into three age appropriate units, with each sub-unit providing a lounge for students. It is reported that single bedrooms are to be created for all students in this unit within the next two years. Serenne unit has also been divided into two age appropriate units, with each again providing a lounge/dining area for the students. New showers and changing areas have been introduced and units have been decorated. All residential units appear warm, comfortable and welcoming. Students comment positively on their bedrooms which they are able to personalise. They also report that thought is given to creating a warm and homely environment and that units provide sufficient space to meet both the individual needs of students and that of the group. Units are also considered appropriately decorated and furnished and maintained to a good standard. As previously reported, the life skills programme which aims to ensure that students leaving the school have acquired an appropriate range of independent living skills, continues to operate. Preparation for leaving care reportedly begins on the student's first day, but comes to greater prominence in Hafan (previously Paddocks) unit, where students can expect to assume greater responsibility for the purchase and preparation of food. A laundry room in the unit also provides students with appropriate facilities for the laundering of clothes. The unit includes a chill out room (the 'pink room'). Students report being encouraged to save their pocket money and are supported in the learning of budgeting skills. It is noted that that the Connexions officer is routinely involved with older students, and in conjunction with the school, works to identify further placements for the student after he/she leaves the school. It is noted however that the school does not have a careers co-ordinator who is directly responsible for the development of a careers education programme.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school's Statement of Purpose continues to be appropriate. It was reviewed in June 2007. Social workers report on the inclusive nature of the school, and partnership schools comment on the pro-active nature of the school and its preparedness to involve a variety of agencies in order to secure the best outcome for its students. From discussion with a variety of stakeholders, inspectors too sense a 'can-do' approach adopted by the school. It is reported that the staffing levels within the Phoenix unit are at a ratio of 1:3 during the day, with two member of staff (waking night staff), on duty at night. In other units, although numbers of staff on duty are reduced, reflecting the lower needs of the students, rotas confirm that an appropriate staffing level is maintained. The school reports that agency staff are not utilised to cover short term staff shortage, with unit managers reporting that they rely instead upon internal arrangements to cover same, thereby ensuring consistency of care. It is also noted that some academic staff participate in after school and unit activities and that some care staff are involved in school based activities. This is seen as good practice. Staff turnover is reported as low. It is reported that unit managers assume responsibility for the supervision of care staff. Reviewed supervision records of four care staff confirm that supervision is occurring but not in all instances as regularly as is required. However, staff comment that formal and informal supervision is readily available to them and that they feel well supported. They report an 'open door policy' with regard to supervision and that 'you can have as much as you want, its there if you need it'. Supervision records are correctly signed by both supervisor and supervisee and staff have received a performance review, although the record is not dated in two instances. Care staff comment positively on training opportunities available to them and consider this area to have improved in the reporting period. Training undertaken is seen to include sexualised behaviour in young people, children who fantasize, de-escalation and physical intervention, eating disorders, working with parents with mental health problems, dealing with young people with Aspergers syndrome, child protection, emotional literacy and social communication difficulties. In the reporting period, the school's caretaker has undertaken fire marshal training. Although the inspection report of June 2006 notes that training in infection control had not been extended to ancillary staff, this situation continues. However infection control training has been undertaken in the reporting period by the school's matron. It is further noted that of 16 care staff, 11 have already completed their National Vocational Qualification in Caring for Children and Young People (NVQ) Level 3, with three other staff reported as close to completing same. The Head of Care and her deputy hold NVQ Level 4. Care staff report that debrief sessions or handovers are held every night, and care staff meetings are held weekly with evidence provided to support this. Senior leadership meetings and open forum meetings that allow individual disciplines to meet on a regular basis with the head teacher are also held. As indicated above, evidence is available to confirm the regular and routine checking of records and logs by both senior staff and by a school governor, thereby identifying trends or patterns of behaviour.

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

Recommendations

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

- ensure that controlled drugs are stored in a double locked cabinet.
- all staff working in the school (including teachers, care staff, temporary and ancillary staff)
 receive at least one and a half hours one to one supervision from a senior member of staff
 each half term.

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 A
 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.