

# North Hill House

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	20 November 2006

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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**

North Hill House is a purpose built, specialist residential and day school for up to 56 boys aged seven to 18 years who have a autistic spectrum disorder or associated disorders. The school currently has 22 day pupils and 34 boarders. All of the pupils are placed by Local Educational Authorities (LEAs) following a statement of special educational needs, or by local authorities who identify them as 'Looked After Children' (LAC). The school is part of the Priory Group which is a national agency providing education and/or care for a range of social care service users. The activities of the school are overseen by a Board of Governors. The residential accommodation comprises of four small group living units known as 'floors'. These are Willow, Maple, Elm and Beech. The school also has two off-site, staffed houses providing residential accommodation for up to five sixth formers who may be attending local colleges. The school and the sixth form houses are situated close to the town centre of Frome. The school has care and teaching staff, learning support assistants, a Speech and Language Therapist, an Occupational Therapist and a Therapeutic Counsellor.

### **Summary**

The school provides a highly specialised and outstanding level of care for young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and its internal communication systems between differing staff groups are of a high standard, as are those with external professional agencies and the parents of the young people placed.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

Records of the administration of medication are now held in each boarding house. Record books of sanctions and physical interventions applied are well documented and signed off when seen by the head of care. The school has improved the accessible outdoor play area by the provision of an adventure playground using good quality materials. Young people are routinely checked at bedtime and during the night. All care and ancillary staff receive regular supervision.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Health plans and Placement plans are co-joined and contain full information about a young person's health background. LAC forms are completed by the placing authorities and these are in place for those young people placed by local authorities and contain Health Records. All such records kept on young people are kept under locked and secure conditions to ensure their confidentiality. The school has an in-house 'Therapy Team' comprising of an Occupational Therapist, a Speech and Language Therapist and a Counsellor. These professionals work in collaboration with teaching and care staff to ensure that the young person's health and social care needs are assessed and that their Placement Plans are implemented and reviewed. All bedrooms have en suite shower and toilet facilities, there is also a bathroom that young people can use if they prefer to bath. There are fully stocked first aid boxes in all key places throughout the school. There are lockable medication cabinets in each of the boarding houses suitable for the storage of both prescribed and controlled drugs. Each of the boarding houses has a well appointed medical room. All those staff who administer medication have received training and

a dated record is kept of this training. The previous inspection by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) included a review by the Pharmacy Inspector who set up the current administration of medication system. There are a sufficient number of care staff who have been trained in first aid to ensure that there is always a qualified person on duty in each boarding house and there is a bring forward system in place to ensure that this training is regularly updated. There is an internal staff training programme 'Foundation for Growth' which also ensures that staff receive training in Health and Safety and in Food Hygiene. The school has an arrangement with the local GP surgery for a doctor to attend to the needs of children at the school who may become ill. Routine dental and optician check ups are arranged by parents and emergency dental treatment can be accessed locally if necessary. Psychiatric assessments can be requested from the local Child and Adolescent, Mental Health Services (CAMHS) teams. Care staff support those young people/children who bedwet in a discreet and caring manner and there is a 'Soiled Linen Policy' in place for staff guidance. It was observed that adequate quantities of food are available at mealtimes, and that menu plans are in place which ensure that a balanced and nutritious diet is provided. Milk, juice, biscuits and fruit are available in the boarding houses during the evenings. Young people can voice their food preferences via their representatives at School Council Meetings which are held each term. Additionally, there are questionnaire surveys for young people and parents which ask them to comment on the quality of food provided. There was evidence seen that special diets are catered for to the extent that catering staff will follow home recipes given by parents. The school has a full programme of evening and weekend activities for boarders which ensures that they have adequate exercise. The school has six mini-buses. All staff who drive must submit their driving licences for inspection and inform the school if they accrue any driving convictions/penalty points.

## **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

The school has an array of information documents for children, parents and stakeholders which help to keep young people safe. It has a distinct 'Statement of Purpose' as defined in Standard 1 of the National Minimum Standards (NMS). There is also a staff handbook. All of these documents contain full details of necessary policies and procedures where relevant, or information where they can be accessed. These include Child Protection, Complaints, Bullying and Missing Young People. Staff spoken to show a clear understanding of these policies and procedures. All of these documents are reviewed annually. However, the 'Young Person's Guide' does not contain the contact details of Ofsted. All care staff have received child protection training from the 'Foundations for Growth' internal training programme and the Head of Care provides newly appointed staff with child protection training within two weeks of starting work. The school has a copy of the local authority 'Safeguarding Children' procedures in place and staff spoken to know how to access this. The school operates a written policy on dealing with bullying and copies of the school's bullying policy are available to all children and staff. All children spoken with told the inspector that they felt safe at North Hill House and they felt that any bullying that occurs is always dealt with effectively by staff. Several young people said that they felt much safer than in their previous schools. Staff vetting and recruitment policies ensure that appropriate checks are made on all staff who come into contact with children on the school premises, including ancillary workers and contractors. Due to the nature of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), the school operates individualised systems of behaviour management which are based on individual assessments of need. There are two purpose built rooms used for safely isolating and calming young people who have lost self control. Several incidents of

young people requiring physical restraint were witnessed by the inspector during the course of the inspection and those incidents requiring the young person to be removed to the special rooms were seen to be dealt with in a sensitive and caring manner by staff. Behaviour management systems are also shown to reward good behaviour and be even handed in dealing with misbehaviour. There are recording logs for physical restraints, incidents and sanctions applied. The inspector witnessed good staff/pupil relationships. There are clear and appropriate policies for staff guidance on Sanctions, Managing Challenging Behaviour and Restrictive Intervention. All staff receive training on Restrictive Physical Intervention before they work in the school. All staff carry a 'walki-talki' to enable them to summon help in an emergency. All staff receive training in fire safety and this is updated at least annually. The records of fire safety checks and drills show that the school conducts frequent equipment checks. However, records of fire drills undertaken have not been signed by the person conducting the drill. Although the Priory Group conduct an annual health and safety check on the school the last Environmental Health Officer inspection of the premises was conducted in 2005. Most young people have a single bedroom and they have lockable facilities in their rooms and outside of classrooms for the safekeeping of valuables. Staff were seen to knock before entering a young person's room.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Each young person has a statement of Special Educational Needs where there has been a core diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). All young people have their educational needs and their educational progress recorded in a Independent Education Plan (IEP). There are weekly staff meetings of care and teaching staff together with the Therapy Team where information is exchanged about educational, social and pastoral care issues affecting individual young people. Each young person has an appointed Academic Tutor, a Pastoral Tutor and a Learning Assistant who have a key responsibility for their education and personal development. Much contact is kept with parents to inform them of their child's progress and matters arising. Parents spoken to were much appreciative of this high level of communication. Care staff spoken to demonstrated a good awareness of this condition and of the needs of young people. The school provides young people with an extensive range of early morning, evening and weekend activities which include sports, games, arts, crafts and musical activities. There are well equipped areas where identified young people hone their fine motor skills by using specialist equipment and textured materials. Several young people are members of local sporting and activity groups, for example, football, rugby, running clubs and air cadets. There are an array of puzzles and games in each of the boarding houses as well as TV, DVD and computer games. Children may attend local church services and school assemblies often include reference to major world religions. Childline and Ofsted contact details are displayed at relevant places around the school. The school has its own counselling services for young people, where particular emotional development needs are worked on. This service is arranged in collaboration with parents. A webcam facility can be set up to support those young people who may become homesick, so they can keep direct contact with their parents.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

A 'School Council' meeting is held every half term where young people's representatives meet with the head teacher and head of care to decide about issues of day to day living at the school.

The meetings are agenda focused and recorded in a proper manner. Young people spoken to felt that this was a fair and appropriate forum for consultation and that their views were respected and acted upon. There were many examples to be seen of how young people's views had been listened to and acted upon. The school conducts annual questionnaire surveys of parents and young people where they are consulted about the quality of care provided by the school. Contact arrangements between the school and parents are agreed at the time the placement is set up and this can be by telephone or face to face. The school hold open days three times a year where parents can have direct access to all staff and where they can ask the school for specialist advice about supporting their children when they are living at home. Behaviour management systems are effective and thought by young people to be fair and proportionate. Excellent child/staff relationships were observed during the inspection. The school's admissions policy involves a three day attendance at the school which includes an overnight stay where their residential and educational needs are assessed. A written report is then sent to parents about how the school intend to meet these needs. After a three month probationary period the placement is reviewed. Each young person attending the school has an individually written Education Plan which is formatted to include an assessment of both their educational and social needs. Connexions Advisors are linked to Year 9 pupils and visit the young person at the school. 'Maples' is used as the specific 'Leavers' floor where young people are helped to prepare for independent living by adherence to a programme of activities designed to assist them. Years 10 and 11 undertake a work experience programme with a local employer. The two sixth form houses have specialist workers who help with the transition from school to work, or further education life. Young people are only allowed to use their mobile phones outside of school time. There are public telephone booths in each unit where they may phone their parents and which afford privacy. They may also use appropriately safeguarded IT systems to contact their parents.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

Young people wear school uniforms during the school day and change into their casual clothing during the evenings. All clothing has to be labelled by parents. An effective laundry system was seen to be in place. Towels and bed linen are changed weekly or more often if required. Staff were seen to deal with a young person's bedwetting in a way that preserved their dignity and a policy is in place which offers staff guidance on this. Parents supply young people with toiletries but the school keeps a supply for young people should these run out. Each of the en suite bedrooms has a shower facility and boys must shower each day. There are personal grooming programmes in place as part of the overall care plan. There are lockable boxes in bedrooms and outside classrooms for the safekeeping of young people's personal items. Parents are billed to provide young people with pocket money which is held by the Head of Care who allocates this according to an agreed age related scale. Most of the young people have savings accounts where appropriate and this is encouraged by the school. There are independent shopping and budgeting programmes in place for older boys. All of the living areas in the boarding houses have adequate space and are bright, airy and furnished and decorated to a good standard. The two sixth form houses are decorated and furnished to a high standard. The young people in the sixth form houses are encouraged to self manage their travel cards and their shopping and cooking with staff assistance. The school Bursar has a development plan for improvements to the buildings and an appointed maintenance worker attends to smaller repairs.

## Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school has an array of information documents for children, parents and stakeholders, including a distinct 'Statement of Purpose' as defined in Standard 1 of the National Minimum Standards (NMS), a young person's guide called the 'Kid's Handbook', an 'Information for Parents/Guardians' booklet and a handbook of policies and procedures for staff. All these documents are reviewed and updated annually. The school has a clearly written Individual Education Plan for each young person attending the school and this contains an assessment of their social needs and records their progress in this regard. These confidential files are kept under secure conditions. Care staff keep a daily report of issues arising in each of the boarding houses. The school has a personnel file in place for each member of staff which records their application, recruitment and vetting. This also records their qualifications, experience and training undertaken. These files were seen to be up to date and clearly written. The Bursar maintains a clearly written and budgeted development plan for the school. The Deputy Head of School is The Head of Care and is part of the school's management team and oversees care staff to ensure the wellbeing of boarders and the high standards of the living environment. Each member of the care staff receives supervision from a line manager on a monthly basis. There was evidence of a high level of pastoral care and good collaboration between educational, therapy and care staff. The Head of Care has many years experience in child care and has a relevant professional qualification. Of the care staff, 60% have at least the NVQ Level 3 Qualification in Child Care. Of the remaining care staff, 25% are registered as NVQ Level 3 candidates. Two members of staff are qualified as NVQ Assessors. All newly appointed member of staff undertakes a comprehensive induction programme and an ongoing training programme, called 'Foundations for Growth' which prepares them for working in this specialised area of care. Each member of staff has an annual Personal Development Plan which addresses their developmental needs. Each member of staff has access to a free counselling service to assist them with any personal or work related issue they may wish for help with. The school has appointed an Independent Listener who provides an advocacy service for young people. The Independent Listener also conducts unannounced NMS 33 monitoring visits monthly and a written report is made to the Head of Care who provides an action plan in response. The Priory Group also conduct monitoring visits with written reports which the Head of Care must respond to with an action plan. The school conducts an annual Review of the Quality of care from which an action plan is created. The school has a Board of Governors who oversee all of the school's activities.

## 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
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### Recommendations

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



- ensure that the Young Person's Guide contains the contact details for Ofsted.
- ensure that the records of fire drills undertaken have been signed by the officer recording the drill.

## 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)

**Annex A**

- 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.**