

Lower Lee School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Julia Toller
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Registered person	Liverpool Education & Lifelong Learning Services
Head of care	William Skelton
Head / Principal	William Skelton
Date of last inspection	11 September 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

Lower Lee is a Residential Special School owned and managed by Liverpool City Council offering education and residential facilities to boys only. The school is able to take up to 22 day pupils, some of whom make use of the residential facilities. In addition, a number of children who attend Hope School, another City Council special school, utilise the residential facilities, and some children enjoy extended days, staying at school for their evening meal and participating in the activities. Accommodation is offered in four separate houses, one of which concentrates on developing the semi-independence skills of the boys who are preparing to leave school.

Summary

The inspection was carried out at a time of change within the school, a new headmaster has been recruited in addition to a new head of care. This was a key inspection and as such all outcome areas were assessed. This was a single inspection event and included inspection of the educational facilities and standards available at the school by an additional Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI). A pre-inspection questionnaire was given to the headmaster to complete on the first day of the inspection. Young people were given questionnaires during the inspection, some of whom chose to complete them with staff or the inspector. During the inspection, inspectors looked at a selection of records, and a full tour of the premises took place. The inspector spoke to four members of staff, the majority of young people accommodated spoke informally to the inspector, plus eight young people joined the inspector for a more formal discussion about what it is like to attend Lower Lee school, and stay at the residential accommodation at the school.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The post of head of care, has been advertised and filled by an experienced and suitably qualified person. The headmaster informed the inspector that the school rebuild project will be starting in early 2008.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Although health care plans are in place for young people, they do not cover all aspects of Standard 14.6 of the National Minimum Standards (NMS). Each individual unit has appropriate first aid equipment in place and most of the staff have completed a basic emergency aid qualification. Comprehensive medication policies and procedures are in place. Records of medication given are well detailed and clear. In relation to controlled drugs a central store is used for each of the four units. As this requires medications to be decanted by staff this is not a safe practice. The manager informed the inspector that cabinets are on order, this will improve medication procedures and therefore the safety and welfare of young people. The inspector joined young people for lunch and tea during the inspection. At both meals a choice of foods were available, including healthy foods and fresh fruit, with catering staff discussing foods that are available with young people. Meetings with catering staff are not taking place at present, these will be re-instated once the school council has been organised for the new school year. Discussions with young people showed that some children who were new to the school were

unsure of what was available at meal times, and said that they would welcome the opportunity to meet with catering staff to discuss choices of foods available to them.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Records of restraints are maintained in line with NMS, these are then monitored by the head of care. The inspectors met with the child protection co-ordinator to discuss the revised child protection policy and their role in safeguarding young people. The child protection coordinator is clear about their role, policies and procedures; although recording in this area is outstanding, communication and information sharing between the school and residential staff where necessary, is an area for improvement. Records of sanctions are maintained and children are aware of sanctions that may be imposed. Sanctions usually consist of early beds or spending time in their bedrooms. Children who spoke to the inspector, said that they feel sanctions imposed are fair. Young people spoke about the differences between units and how young people are treated, it is the role of the manager to ensure that all young people are treated equally with similar boundaries, sanctions and rewards. There is a policy and procedure whereby all absences by pupils from the school without permission are monitored and documented. The inspector observed this being followed up during the course of the inspection. Inspection of staff files demonstrated that a recruitment and selection process is in place that includes: completed application form, reference checks that are verified, an interview which is scored, and physical health declaration, these procedures assist in safeguarding young people. There is a policy and procedure in place with regard to bullying within the school. Young people said that they feel safe at the school, when bullying does take place teachers and staff act to stop it. Bullying was not highlighted as an issue in young people's questionnaires.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Hand over meetings are held between residential and education staff each morning and evening to discuss behaviours and homework set for young people. However, verbal discussions are not always sufficient to ensure the safeguarding of young people. Residential staff have been provided to work alongside teaching staff during lessons enabling residential staff to have a greater understanding of children's individual needs and support and also to help foster links between the education and residential aspect of the school. Staff on the residential units facilitate children's homework with time set aside for the completion of homework as part of the night time routines for children. Study facilities are provided on each unit including individual study space, learning materials and access to computers. Children have access to the school gym and are able to access local amenities including the local park. Risk assessments in relation to activities enjoyed by the children on a residential basis need to be improved. Activities have included, basketball, football, golf, swimming, gardening, cricket, painting and cooking. Young people were allowed to choose the activity they wanted to take part in, some young people said they would like to take part in more activities such as bowling and cinema trips, or activities in the community where they mix with young people of similar ages. Each young person is allocated a key worker, these sessions are not well documented at present as it is the start of term.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

The admission procedures for young people to the school remain an area for significant improvement. Discussions with staff and inspection of records indicate that although basic information is obtained prior to a child being placed, this is not in line with NMS 11.3. Staff discussed that occasions have occurred when children have been placed displaying behaviours that could put other young people at risk. During the inspection positive relations were observed between children and staff on duty. Incidents of challenging behaviour were seen to be dealt with appropriately by staff and it is evident that the staff on the units try to adopt a consistent approach to behaviour management. Young people can access the telephone when required to contact family and friends though many young people have their own mobile phone. A key worker system is in place and all of the children that spoke with the inspectors were aware of their key worker and their role. Each child has a written care plan in place that details their needs and how those needs are to be met, although these do not contain all the information as outlined in NMS 17.5. This is an area for further development.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Within the residential units children wear their own clothes and there are procedures in place for the safekeeping of monies, mobile phones etc where appropriate. Young people can go to local shops with staff to purchase further items that they might want or need. The environment continues to be an issue at the school, although the temporary decorative work remains on the whole well maintained. Plans continue for the rebuild to be completed in 2008, which will greatly enhance the care package offered to children at the school. Some houses have completed art work with children, which is displayed on the walls. This has helped to personalise the environment. Extra seating is required in some lounges, and the televisions have very poor reception, which was an issue for many children. New carpets and furnishings are in the process of being fitted as required. The manager is taking a reasonable approach and attending to works that are essential, whilst not wasting money prior to the new build. In preparation of leaving care, young people spend time in the independent unit where they are encouraged to undertake tasks of cooking, cleaning and laundry care. Staff said that they develop the negotiation skills of young people in this unit and try to help them make decisions of their own. Young people have access to bathroom facilities in each of the units, young people said that privacy is not an issue within these. Staff members were observed knocking on bedroom doors prior to entering young people's bedrooms. Young people informed the inspector that there are places to 'chill out quietly', when needed.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The staff group had mixed views during this inspection which was partly due to changes. Changes from new staff employed, staff leaving, staff moving within units and implementation of new systems. Two of the care staff hold qualifications in National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 of Caring for Children and Young People or the equivalent, the head of care is actively seeking further places for staff members. The head of care has begun to offer all staff regular one to one supervision, anti oppressive practice is discussed and noted within these. The head of care is in the process of reviewing the children's files to ensure that the records are maintained in line with NMS. Staff meetings take place on a regular basis, which will help the staff group to develop throughout the current changes. Each unit also hold their own house meeting, to ensure that a consistent approach is maintained by the individual staff groups. The

board of governors meet and visit the school on a regular basis and copies of these reports are available for inspection.

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 suitable storage arrangements for controlled drugs are located on each of the residential units (NMS 14.6)
- arrange for meetings between catering staff and young people to discuss meal options and choices of foods that are available to them (NMS 2.1)
- develop a formal system of handover sheets between the school and the residential unit as a means of improving communication and sharing possible concerns about young people (NMS 3.1)
- develop a behaviour reward system for rewarding positive behaviour in line with individual's needs (NMS 10.1)
- ensure that key worker sessions take place and are recorded on a regular basis to make sure that the needs of young people are met (NMS 22.1)
- develop health care plans for all young people to ensure that the health care needs of young people are being monitored and met (NMS 14.2)
- ensure that full information regarding the behaviours of young people is available to education and residential staff prior to the young person's admission so that full risk assessments can be developed and appropriate action taken to minimise risk (NMS 11.5)
- develop care plans to ensure they contain information in accordance with NMS Standard 17.5 and be consistent with any placing authority plan for the child (NMS 17.5)
- expand key worker sessions on the independent unit to include access to further education, employment, finances, housing, and support networks (NMS 21.2)

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.