

# Coln House

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**

Coln House is a residential special school catering for boys and girls aged nine to 16 years. Weekly boarding is available for 35 boys and six girls, the school has an additional 14 places for day pupils. The boarding accommodation is divided into five house areas providing small group living. A small cottage is available for independence training. All pupils have behavioural, emotional, social and associated learning difficulties. The school is maintained by Gloucestershire County Council and is situated on the edge of the Cotswold market town of Fairford.

### **Summary**

The school provides a good service for boarders by a dedicated staff team. The boarders respond well to the behaviour management system and this is evident in their enjoyment of school and development of self control and self worth. The family style group living supports boarders in reaching their personal targets and providing consistency of care; there are good relationships between boarders and staff. A wide range of activities are available, often providing new experiences. The creative curriculum includes horticulture that provides produce to be eaten at school and sold to local businesses. The school makes a positive contribution to the local community. Recruitment practices are not being consistently applied and there have not been regular visits to boarding from a representative of the governing body. The academic standards were inspected by education inspectors from Ofsted at the same time. A separate report is available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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 has improved the levels of privacy for boarders by using an internal radio system with earpieces to be more discreet when sharing information amongst staff. Additionally cordless telephones are available in the house areas to enable boarders to have private telephone conversations. Boarders are provided with updated details on how to contact inspectors. School recruitment practices have not improved sufficiently and another recommendation has been made as a result of this inspection.

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

The provision is good.

Health needs for each young person are identified and recorded as part of the admission process to the school. Parental consent is obtained to administer medication, first aid and emergency medical treatment; this ensures that the young people receive medical attention according to their parents' wishes. Medication is securely stored and administered appropriately with suitable records made. A designated member of staff takes responsibility for boarders' medication and has received guidance from trained medical staff. The school has appointed a nurse to take on this role, she will commence in January 2008. The school staff liaise well with other health professionals in response to the health and medical needs of boarders, whilst maintaining contact with parents. In response to a lack of understanding about particular health issues the school ensures that training is provided. Designated staff are trained in first aid and they are indicated on the staff rota so that other staff know who to contact in the event of an accident and injury. The school delivers Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) throughout the

24 hour curriculum in the classrooms and in residential house groups at appropriate levels of development. Residential staff are actively involved with PSHE and promote personal hygiene and life skills towards independence. Meals are taken within house groups providing a social setting like a family. The menu provides a nutritious diet with many vegetables sourced from the garden maintained by the pupils. Their involvement with horticulture has provided opportunities for boarders to try vegetables, fruit and salad leading to them enjoying a more varied and healthy diet. Generally the boarders are satisfied with the school food but some said they would welcome the choice of sandwiches or baguettes at lunchtime instead of a hot meal. The school kitchens are routinely inspected by the environmental health agency who have awarded the school five stars and this is announced on the Cotswold District Council website. In addition the school has achieved 'Healthy School' status.

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

The provision is good.

The use of a radio communication system between staff involves using earpieces to ensure that information about pupils is not broadcast to others. This has improved since the last inspection. Boarders do not report any lack of privacy shown by staff. There is a complaints procedures for parents and boarders. A notice is displayed around the boarding areas detailing who boarders can approach with any concern or complaint, this includes the contact details for Ofsted. A child friendly booklet is given to boarders on admission and this also provides details on how to complain. There are very good relationships between boarders and staff and this clearly contributes to any difficulties being resolved easily without the need to implement the complaints procedures. When asked what is good about this school, some boarders said the staff and stated that they were easy to get along with. The designated person for child protection has received appropriate external training with the local authority and general staff training occurs every two years, ensuring staff know how to respond to any concern or disclosure of child abuse. Child protection policies and procedures provide clear guidance to all staff. The head of care has developed a good working relationship with the local authority and maintains comprehensive records of any concerns that arise. The school is involved with an initiative for children causing concern, whose behaviour and/or social life is having an impact on their school progress. This pro-active approach allows support to be offered to the child and their family through outreach work or referral to Parent Training Network. This preventative work involves the school working with agencies from health, education and social care. Coln House School promotes anti-bullying behaviour through the classroom, whole school events, focus week and on an individual level linked to the behaviour management points system. Any incidents of bullying are recorded on the behaviour management tracking system where analysis can be made of any patterns or trends. Boarders and day pupils are invited to complete a survey about bullying which informs the head of any issues that need to be addressed. Boarders reported that there were very few incidents of bullying and when reported the staff deal with it promptly. Positive behaviour is noticed and praised and linked to a points system that covers the 24 hour curriculum. The points total dictates which league a pupil is in and the more points achieved the greater access to activities. The boarders understand this system well and feel it is fair. They respond well to equating good behaviour with opportunities to join in a wide range of activities. The boarders are supported by staff to focus on their behaviour and consequences. Staff are suitably trained in de-escalation techniques and record fully when any sanction is issued or physical restraint used. Any incident of negative behaviour is recorded electronically and a tracker system permits the head and senior staff to monitor any patterns of behaviour. Some boarders state that it is helpful that they can take 'time out' to calm down when things

get difficult without losing points, they recognise that the staff are helping them to take control of their behaviour. Fire safety procedures are in place, boarders and staff know what to do in the event of the fire alarm being activated. Records indicate that the system is being tested, a comprehensive fire risk assessment has been completed and designated staff have received training in fire safety. Risk assessments for activities and areas of the school are in place. There are safe policies for use of transport and regular safety checks occur of gas and electrical appliances. The recruitment process does not routinely ensure that sufficient references and other documentation are obtained before employment. Clearance through the Criminal Records Bureau is undertaken for all staff, a delay has occurred in the school's application for this clearance for some staff. The local authority are responsible for providing taxi drivers who have received clearance through the Criminal Records Bureau.

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

The provision is outstanding.

There is excellent support of boarders' educational achievement by the boarding provision at Coln House. Good communication between classroom and residential staff promote consistency for boarders and the same behaviour management system is used throughout the school. At the end of the school day boarders are supported in a formal setting within their house groups with literacy twice a week and PSHE. Senior staff are actively involved with pupils in the school day and in the boarding provision. Horticulture is incorporated into the curriculum and valued by many pupils who develop a sense of achievement in growing their own fruit and vegetables. In addition to supplying the school kitchen, deliveries are made to local pubs, hotels and restaurants where the generated income is used to fund activities and sports equipment. A small cottage on site enables older boarders to experience living independently for a week or two with the support of staff on site and in close proximity. Individual targets are set to address literacy, numeracy, behaviour and social skills. These targets are throughout the school, in classrooms and boarding where staff work together to assist pupils in meeting them. A range of individual support is offered to boarders and their families. Outreach support is available at the weekends and school holidays in the form of telephone support and advice through to visits and outings. To improve self esteem and capture memories and experiences, a memory book is made with each boarder containing photographs and details of outings, events and achievements whilst at Coln House. The memory books are maintained throughout a boarder's stay at the school and become a special gift upon leaving the school. Coln House supports Year 10 pupils with work placements in the local community. There are good relationships that have been built up with local employers and great care is taken to recognise individual strengths and abilities to ensure successful placements. Residential staff support boarders in preparing for their working day in choosing suitable clothing, taking any necessary equipment and taking a packed lunch. Although not a key standard it is important to recognise the quality and extensive range of activities on offer that is greatly appreciated by boarders. The school takes appropriate steps to ensure safety is paramount without compromising opportunities to experience some high risk activities under close supervision. Boarders recognise that they are given a chance to try new activities and they report how they like being outdoors near the river, in the woods, camping, chopping logs, using Gopeds and walking in surrounding countryside. When asked to state what was good about being a boarder at Coln House, many boarders spoke of the activities. Many sporting activities are available along with art, dance workshops and the school's own climbing wall. The school youth club offers a selection of electronic games, a pool table, darts, television and DVD player. The boarders enjoy this facility and can use it according to their points privilege.

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

The provision is outstanding.

There are formal opportunities where boarders are consulted such as the pupil council and questionnaires. Views are gathered informally through group discussion in house areas, classrooms and on a more individual level with staff. The pupil council has implemented changes such as; increased activities, new bedroom furniture, changes in the menu and re-decorated and equipped the youth club. Comprehensive care plans are regularly updated, they cover all aspects of the boarders' care needs in conjunction with the health and medical information. Care plans and targets are shared with boarders and their parents as appropriate and reviewed at least annually at formal review meetings. Boarders are able to freely maintain contact with their families. Parents are able to contact their children at reasonable times and visit by arrangement. Boarding and teaching staff maintain good communication with parents through weekly diaries and telephone calls, a designated member of staff is the home liaison officer and makes herself available to boarders' parents at weekends and during holidays. Parents state that they feel very well informed by the school and can contact staff directly to discuss their child. The school sends an annual questionnaire to parents where they can have a say about their child's school. The head has built up strong links within the community to raise the profile of the school and ensure that the pupils can be involved and contribute to the local town. Pupils have made a positive contribution to the community of Fairford by; renovating and maintaining the public bus shelter outside the school, planting and maintaining the flower tubs in the market square, carol singing, selling produce and plants that the school has grown and tidying up the riverbank.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

The boarding accommodation is divided into five house areas, one for girls and the remainder for boys. The boys are accommodated according to age group, some with single rooms others sharing. Each house area accommodates up to approximately eight boarders and has its own lounge, dining room and kitchen. The accommodation is in good decorative order providing a homely feel with comfortable furniture. The boarders state that they like their accommodation and identify with their house group whilst having the option to join others for activities. Repairs and maintenance issues are promptly dealt with by the site manager and his assistant.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

School documents about the boarding provision are good with a child friendly booklet providing key information. The school has a statement of purpose clearly specifying what the school's aims are and what they will do to support pupils. Good staffing levels provide quality care and supervision for the boarders, any absences are covered from within the school staff team to ensure consistency of care for the boarders. There are good arrangements in place for senior cover on duty and access to senior management for advice and support when needed. Staff training has covered mandatory areas such as child protection, Studio 3, first aid and NVQ awards in caring for children and young people. The head of care has been awarded NVQ level 4 in management. Four residential staff have achieved NVQ level 3 and three staff are working towards this award. The residential staff meet regularly to discuss the boarders' development and current practice issues. Staff feel well supported in doing their jobs and are very committed

to the boarders and assisting with their development. The head undertakes regular monitoring of records as does the head of care. The head of care annually reviews policies and procedures relating to child welfare and protection. The head provides good leadership and staff acknowledge how the head has raised standards of behaviour and attainment for the pupils and promoted the profile of the school enabling it to contribute positively to the local community. School governors have not visited the boarding provision as expected to meet the national minimum standard. Visits are required each term with a written report available to all governors.

## **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.

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Due date</b>
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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 safer recruitment practices are consistently applied. (NMS 27)
- arrange for a member of the governing body to visit the boarding provision each term and produce a written report of their findings. (NMS 33)



## 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.**