

Moor House School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Sophie Wood
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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

Moor House school is situated in a pleasant residential area of Oxted in Surrey. All pupils possess varying degrees of speech and language difficulties and all are boarders. Boarding accommodation is situated over the first and second floor of the premises and dormitories separate boarders by age and gender; there are currently 19 girls and 62 boys. A team of residential care staff work closely with teachers and the therapy department to deliver a holistic package of care that maximises potential and independence. Set within large, well maintained grounds, the school offers a safe and secure physical environment, with good public transport links to nearby towns.

Summary

This announced key inspection was conducted over two days by one inspector. All of the key standards were inspected and the recommendations from last year's inspection were reviewed. The overall quality of boarding provision is judged to be good, with areas of outstanding practice. Boarding students and their parents can be assured the school is being effectively led and managed, with care being delivered by staff who possess the skills and expertise to do so.

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 actively implemented the recommendations made from its last inspection and beyond this, has implemented changes and improvements of its own. All care staff have received appropriate medication training and the new health suite is very near completion. Policies and procedures remain subject to ongoing review and amendment. This particular piece of work is being conducted in a timely manner, to ensure rigour and attention to detail. Appropriate life skills training is becoming embedded within the curriculum and creative ideas for improved community presence and participation are coming to fruition. The ongoing involvement from an external health and safety consultancy has identified priority areas, which are being targeted by the school for action.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Boarders benefit by having their primary and tertiary health needs routinely assessed and met. Nursing cover is available throughout the day, up until boarders go to bed and all care staff receive medication training through an ongoing rolling programme. Clear policy and procedural guidance means care staff know exactly how to summons assistance in the event of an emergency, however, written parental consent for treatment was not found in all cases. Medical conditions and illnesses are known by the staff, within the confines of protecting confidentiality. Medicines and equipment are safely stored and the school nurse maintains clear, legible administration records. There is a low level of need for the use of controlled medication. This is securely stored and safely administered by the nurse, however, varying staffing levels affect whether a second person is available to sign for the administration and in some cases, boarders are the second signatory. A comprehensive list of homely remedies is kept and parents are asked for their permission before any of this can be routinely used. Clear written guidance is available on all such medicines to enable care staff to consider when and how this should be

given. Almost every member of the care team is first aid trained and a clear record is kept of all accidents and illnesses occurring within the school. Boarders can easily access local generic health care services and in addition the school can enlist the services of a Paediatrician, Educational Psychologist and Physiotherapist when necessary. An Integrative Child Psychotherapist is also employed by the school for one day each week, as is a qualified Counsellor, who is available for eight hours per week. Referrals to external health professionals are made appropriately and a Dietician from the local hospital is routinely asked for advice on menu planning. The newly refurbished medical suite is spacious and has been well planned. It is due for occupancy within the next few weeks. Boarders routinely speak of the school nurse as a trusted and caring individual, whom they readily turn to with any problems they may have. The quality of the food provided by the school is mainly commended by the boarders. The catering manager has been at the school in excess of 20 years and line manages the catering and domestic teams. All members of the catering team possess suitable qualifications and the main kitchen is clean, well equipped and free of hazards. Good ongoing liaison with the school nurse ensures allergies and special dietary requirements are suitably catered for. The dining area is spacious and clean. Boarders benefit from a good range of choice and are frequently consulted about menus. Any necessary assistance is given discreetly and mealtimes are sociable relaxed occasions. Older boarders are able to prepare and cook meals as part of their life skills training and four have so far achieved a food hygiene certificate under the direction of the catering manager who is qualified to teach this. Surveys received from a small number of parents state the snacks available from the tuck shop are 'not always healthy'. The school is currently consulting with parents to address this concern.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Policy and procedural guidance concerned with privacy and confidentiality is being implemented in practice. This serves to protect sensitive information, whilst ensuring it is appropriately shared. Privacy is sometimes compromised due to the physical inadequacies of some of the boarding areas and not because of staff working practices. Boarders understand the complaints procedure, though they say they rarely need to use it as their issues are satisfactorily addressed by simply alerting staff to their concerns. Staff understand the processes for dealing with external and third party complaints, for example, those from parents. The Head Teacher maintains a clear chronology and investigative records show a thorough and detailed approach is undertaken. Boarders say that instances of bullying are extremely rare; a high number have been bullied previously and say this school effectively implements its own guidance, which also covers racism. They say they feel safe. All matters pertaining to child protection are comprehensively and robustly covered. Boarders are safe at school. Training in this field is mandatory and it is continually refreshed and updated. Policies and procedures are congruent with legislation and training material from the local Social Services safeguarding team is used. Every member of staff from every discipline is familiar with child protection procedures and takes their own roles and responsibilities very seriously. Procedures for reporting significant events and unauthorised absences are in place and understood, though actual occurrences are very rare. The staff team has received appropriate training in the use of physical interventions; there have been eight such incidents since the last inspection. Far greater emphasis is placed upon rewarding positive behaviour and using de-escalation techniques before invoking physical means as a last resort. The policy on behaviour management has been rewritten and is awaiting ratification and a draft positive handling policy is at a similar stage. Staff however, are explicitly clear about permissible sanctions and interventions and written records support this.

Observations of working practices further demonstrate that boarders enjoy positive relationships with their care givers, with appropriate boundaries being understood by all parties. The Bursar retains an overall responsibility for health and safety matters. Alongside the Head Teacher, he has taken a considered and pragmatic view of all of the wide ranging areas falling under this heading. This has resulted in the commissioning of the services of an independent consultant and thus far a complete audit of all health and safety matters, including fire, security, premises, risk assessments and activities has been completed. Fire records and evacuation practises are up to date, the school has adequate insurance cover, electrical and gas appliances are safe and risk assessments are subject to ongoing review. Boarding areas offer a safe environment: all windows are suitably restricted and hot water temperatures are regulated. Radiators are not regulated or covered and this decision has not been supported through written risk assessment. Emphasis upon child protection extends clearly into staff recruitment. The recruitment policy is sound and has been updated this year and members of the senior management team have received recent training in safe recruitment. The school's recruitment process is robust and serves to ensure thorough vetting. Staff personnel records support this.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Excellent levels of communication between teaching, residential and therapy teams ensures a seamless approach is followed between school and boarding. All staff and boarders are familiar with individual targets and much work has been completed over the last year in terms of life skills planning. The therapy team have a flexible timetable which allows them to spend time in school and boarding and after school clubs further enhance educational and social development. Teachers comment positively on the completion and support for homework. They also say boarders arrive on time and are well prepared for the school day. Appropriate and meaningful leisure activities are provided. Boarders are particularly positive about this aspect of service provision. Although the school itself reports it could improve upon community presence and participation, an abundance of opportunities is already in place, including the Duke of Edinburgh Award which has placed students in community settings, as well as ongoing work experience projects. Other examples of regular activities include bowling, cinema, Cubs, horse riding and accessing local colleges. Within the school, older boarders have their own separate common room, equipped with a kitchen and television lounges. The grounds, sports hall and swimming pool are also accessible during after school hours. This aspect of service provision is commended. Boarders further benefit from having their own unique support needs recognised and met. Care files record such details and show how specific individual support is being delivered. This includes health and medical needs, as well as emotional difficulties, such as homesickness and again, a multi - disciplinary approach is used. In practice, this ensures support is given by those with the skills to do so, such as the occupational therapists, school nurse, counsellor and independent listener. Boarders confirm they are effectively supported and name staff across all disciplines in this regard.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The school actively engages boarders in meaningful consultation. The student council is given very real and appropriate responsibilities and those in post are very proud of their roles and achievements. Boarders who are not members speak very positively of this group and readily give their representatives ideas for discussion. Boarders have been actively involved with staff

recruitment and each year group has a real say in the decoration and equipment of their common rooms. Boarders were also asked for comment on recent policy review, such as school rules and anti - bullying. Given the key presenting needs of boarders, the school places significant importance upon the acquisition of communication skills. It hosts a national special interest group for specific language impairment three times a year and all staff receive ongoing training in various communication methods that meet the needs of the boarders. The admissions process is specific and clear. Through sound assessment, the school is explicitly clear about the needs it can and cannot provide a service for. Boarders are, therefore, within an environment that fully maximises their potential. Such assessments continue into regular multi - disciplinary reviews and this process ensures care plans are specific and up to date. Boarders enjoy regular means of contact with their parents through various means, including telephone and email. Parent surveys commend the level and degree of communication received from the school.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The boarding element of service provision distinctly recognises the end of the school day. Whilst there are expectations concerning the completion of homework, boarders are also encouraged to relax, change into their own clothes, spend time with friends and engage in leisure activities, as they would at home. Appropriate support is given to obtain necessary items and personal requisites. Pocket money is appropriately looked after and distributed. Boarders are discouraged from bringing in items of particular value, although all have their own lockable storage within their common rooms. Although no boarder is currently being 'looked after' by their local authority, the school works extremely hard to provide opportunities that are associated with growing up and leaving the safety of a very nurturing environment. Boarders attend appropriate work experience placements, practise cooking and budgeting skills, learn to interpret public transport timetables and more generally, explore the wider community. The boarding accommodation is situated over two floors and is suitably separated by age and gender. Boarders are encouraged to personalise their own areas and as they grow older, pupils are afforded more private space within the dormitories. Maintenance and refurbishment of these areas remains ongoing. A number of bathrooms do not fully protect privacy and remain in need of redecoration. There is an appropriate number of showers, toilets and wash basins available to the boarders, however, some of the wash basins are situated within the main dormitory amongst the sleeping areas, with no added privacy protection. The school has its own laundry facilities and the staff here work hard to ensure bedding and uniforms are regularly laundered, pressed and returned within a quick turnaround. Boarders appreciate this service and are given the appropriate responsibility of bringing their own washing to the entrance of the laundry area on designated days. The area itself is compact, very busy and houses large pieces of equipment, hence it is out of bounds to boarders. The infection control policy does not include guidance in the event of boarders handling their own soiled laundry, although appropriate equipment is provided.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Information and literature about the school is readily available to parents and boarders in formats designed to meet the needs of the intended audience. The website is informative and continually updated. Policies and procedures are effectively communicated to all stakeholders including staff, parents and boarders. Care files are well ordered and show clear ongoing assessment and review. A holistic approach to care planning seeks advice and input from a

range of professionals and this meets needs effectively. The senior management team comprises a group of motivated, long serving school employees. They are led by a dynamic, relatively new Head Teacher, who adopts an inclusive, clear and strategic style of management. Care staff receive the scope and breadth of training they need to meet the needs of the boarders. The last year has seen some challenges for this department in terms of the departure of the previous Head of Care, a degree of staffing shortages and changes to the duty rota. This has impacted on the regularity of formal supervision meetings for the care team and a small number of parents have commented on low levels of the supervision of boarders when they arrive and leave school at the beginning and end of the week. The current acting Head of Care is working with the team to introduce new shift patterns and a number of part time staff have recently been appointed. The Governing Body is very active and its various sub committees have very clear areas of responsibility. The school has recently appointed a new standard 33 visitor, whose first report on boarding provision is detailed, specific and clear. Its findings and recommendations reflect the National Minimum Standards for this service provision and is being used to inform the school's own development plan.

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 written parental consent for medical treatment is detailed within health records and review staffing levels at medication administration times to ensure two staff are available with regards controlled medication. Review the current broad list of homely remedies (NMS 14).
- support the absence of radiator covers within the boarding areas through written risk assessments (NMS 26).
- review the current infection control policy with regards the boarders' handling of soiled laundry and consider expanding the size of the laundry room facilities (NMS 24).
- consider the overall quality of the dormitory provision within the long term development plans for the school, with particular reference to the numbers of boarders sharing (NMS 24).
- ensure all toilets and bathrooms are maintained and decorated to a good overall standard and provide improved privacy with regards some of the wash hand basin areas (NMS 25).
- ensure mechanisms are reinstated for the continued regular supervision and appraisal of the care team (NMS 30).
- continue to review staffing levels and make appropriate provision at the busier times of the day (NMS 28).

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.