

Pencalenick Residential Special School

Inspection report for residential special school

Unique reference number	SC041223
Inspection date	5 February 2008
Inspector	Jay Miles
Type of Inspection	Key

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Date of last inspection	5 December 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

Pencalenick School is a special school providing education for 120 children with complex communication learning difficulties. The children, who come from all over Cornwall, are age 11 to 16 years. The school has recently been successful in achieving Communication Interaction Specialist Status. (2007) The school campus is founded on a large country house with extensive grounds, in close proximity to Truro. All the day pupils arrive either by bus or taxi. The school runs a weekly boarding unit in the main school building which can accommodate up to 30 children. Currently there are 19 boarders who stay from Monday morning until Friday afternoon. The school also offers flexible boarding where children stay for one or two nights a week. Five children are using this facility and there are others that stay on an occasional basis. Most children board for geographical reasons. The boarders sleep in single gender dormitories which vary in size, the largest accommodating five.

Summary

At this announced inspection of the school's residential provision, all key standards were inspected. Since the last inspection, the school has re-configured and improved the boarding facilities. The changes are very new and some work is still in progress. In essence, the boys' accommodation has integrated with the girls' accommodation. Together they occupy two floors of one wing of the main school building. This mixed gender approach is supported by careful assessment. It is working well and is creating a homely atmosphere. A considerable amount of re-decoration and upgrade has taken place. The dormitories, lounges and kitchens provide a comfortable boarding experience. The showers and bathrooms are improved in part but further upgrade is planned. The children and staff like the new arrangements. The boarders are enthusiastic about boarding. They enjoy the ability to do things with their friends after school and are positive about the staff, the food, the activities on offer and the care they receive. They all have someone they feel they can talk to if they have concerns and they appear at ease and happy. There is a sense of community. This was captured in questionnaire responses; an example being 'We can make new friends and the staff make us laugh and we all help each other'. The boarding provision is recognised by the school as a valuable asset. It receives the full support of the Headmaster and the Governors. It benefits from having a committed, child focussed staff team, many of whom have worked at the school for a number of years. The Head of Care, managing the boarding service, is experienced and central to the overall management of the school. Weaknesses identified are largely matters relating to updating records and policy documentation. Work is being done to meet issues raised by the fire brigade and plans are in place to upgrade the shower room facilities. This inspection confirmed that the school works hard to address issues arising for children. Children are treated as individuals. The staff know the children well and try to ensure they have support and understanding. They act as strong advocates for the children.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Recommendations made during the last inspection have been addressed in part: the bathrooms now have heated towel rails; baths have been re-enamelled; staff supervision is being provided and records kept. Recommendations not yet fully addressed include improving provision of

healthy options for evening snacks; reviewing record systems to improve audit trails; developing systems for ensuring boarding staff are receiving adequate update and professional development. The school has introduced a number of improvements as part of its own development plan. These have been positive and include establishing flexible boarding to allow more children to enjoy and benefit from the boarding experience. In addition, the school has established an extended school programme where day pupils can join boarders for evening activities and supper. This increases the children's opportunity to socialise and, the additional support of teaching staff for these evenings, facilitates a wider choice of out of school activities. Increased staffing levels in general are helping to support more children with complex care needs. Physical enhancements include additional CCTV coverage to support safety. The boarding areas have been largely re-decorated and there is now a clear division by floors between the older and younger boarders, which recognises the senior boarders' ability to take more responsibility for themselves.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The school pro-actively supports children to be healthy and has received a 'Healthy Schools Award'. It promotes healthy lifestyles by offering a variety of activities, healthy food options, and one to one support for children when life feels 'out of sorts'. Many of the children enjoy outdoor activities and take advantage of the school's grounds. However, staff are careful to provide choices that recognise difference and help children who are less physical. Boarders enjoy the meals provided. All the food is cooked on site and is largely prepared from fresh ingredients. There has been a conscious effort to reduce use of processed food products. The children have lots of opportunity to help themselves to fresh fruit. The boarders' meal times are truly social occasions. The children chat in a relaxed way with staff as well as with each other. Every child is included. Health needs are discussed with parents and expert health advice is obtained when necessary. All boarders have a school medical and, whilst parents retain responsibility for their children's health arrangements, the school is able to access medical, optical and dental services if necessary. Medication is administered by two specific staff and clear, immaculate records are kept. Other care staff are rarely required to administer medication which means they have limited opportunity to maintain their medication skills. The school has a medication policy but it has not been updated to reflect current practice. Each child has a written health care plan. Staff receive training to meet children's specific health care needs. Staff encourage children to manage their personal hygiene but the children know they can ask for help and they know where to go if they feel unwell. Staff make arrangements to take boarders home if necessary. First aid materials are readily available. All staff are first aid trained but some are due to update their first aid qualifications in order to be able to support outings and activities. The school is good at helping with children's individual health needs including special dietary and mobility requirements. It is also good at identifying more general health need. For example, it is currently seeking to improve children's access to dental care.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The school pro-actively supports children's safety. Children feel safe and protected. Staff support children's privacy and dignity but the re-location of some of the boarding facilities has affected some privacy matters. For example, the boarders' telephone is in a busy thoroughfare and the shower rooms are located on mixed gender corridors but have no lockable changing

facilities. The children have a good relationship with staff and all have at least one member of staff they feel able to talk to when troubled. A parent specifically commented that the school is good at responding to concerns. The school has a complaints policy but no children's version to ensure children know how to complain, feel able to complain and know they can make a complaint directly to Ofsted. There is no specific record of complaints to aid monitoring. The school provides staff child protection training but recognises that update is needed to reflect recent local authority procedural changes and to ensure all new staff are aware of their child protection responsibilities. The school works well with other agencies to support children's safety and well being. However, records are insufficient to provide a clear audit trail of the decisions and actions taken by the school when there are concerns. The school's child protection policy makes no reference to Ofsted notification requirements. There is a whole school approach to curbing bullying. It is everybody's business. The School Council has recently addressed bullying as a topic and the Headmaster focuses on pupils' responsibilities towards each other in assemblies. Staff are watchful and work together to reduce the potential for bullying. Boarders comments indicate that issues tend to be during school breaks in the playground. The school has recently set up a pastoral support care team. Their office provides a relaxed, friendly environment for children if they are feeling vulnerable or want somewhere quiet during break. In addition, the school is developing playground facilities for those needing a more gentle environment. The school has a missing child policy. Staff carefully balance children's freedom with their responsibilities for ensuring all children are accounted for. Children very rarely leave the school without permission. The children are polite, sociable and have very good manners. They listen and respond to their teachers and care staff. In the boarding house they have fun with the staff but know when they must listen and take note. Occasionally staff need to apply a sanction but this is rare. Sanctions are appropriate and tend to be either an early bedtime or removal of a particular activity, such as watching television. 'Team Teach' behaviour management strategies are used to defuse situations. Restraint is rarely necessary. Staff seek advice from colleagues if they experience difficulty in managing a particular child's behaviour. Staff appreciate that children's individual circumstances and their disabilities can trigger unusual behaviour patterns. They are pragmatic and try to help children manage their anxieties. Staff complete risk assessments for activities off site. The Head of Care is responsible for all health and safety matters and works closely with the school caretakers to risk assess the buildings and grounds each year. The school has fire drill practices every term and fire alarm checks are completed weekly. The Fire Service has recently reviewed the school's fire safety measures and issued fire enforcement notices requiring various upgrades. These are being addressed to meet the required time schedule. Children's individual risk, in terms of exiting in an emergency, is not assessed. The school protects children by checking visitors, preventing unauthorised access and providing boarding staff with radio intercoms. The school adheres to the Local Authority staff recruitment policy. This is also applied to volunteers and details are obtained of staff working in the school that have been appointed by external agencies. The Bursar has an efficient employment record system and ensures all required checks are made.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The school values its boarding facility. The boarders are ready for school as soon as they arrive in class. They benefit from a good night's sleep, a good breakfast, and no journey. The boarding staff know the boarders well and link with the children's teachers if there are concerns. The boarders enjoy a relaxed environment where school issues are not dwelt on and staff provide individual support. Although the children have no routine homework, the boarding staff are

happy to help with any school work. All the staff know the children well and are aware of their strengths, their problems and their needs. Each child is carefully assessed and re-assessed to take account of their achievements and any changes. The school links with external agencies for specialist support for children and finds creative ways to include and help children. The boarders are not allocated specific members of staff but are cared for by the staff team. The children know they can talk to anyone they choose. There are computer facilities, toys and games available. The children enjoy being able to play without the pressure of age expectation or convention. Each evening after school the boarders are offered a choice of activities. A successful new 'extended school's programme' allows day pupils to join the boarders. This has increased their social interaction and facilitates a wider choice of activities including art, computer work, ice skating, swimming and golf. The children contribute to local projects and currently their merged craft, art and computer creations are being prepared for local museum and gallery exhibition. After the evening's activities the staff and children create a really homely atmosphere. Evening showers and baths followed by supper and bedtime drinks support the children's gradual wind down, so they are ready for sleep. Although some children might prefer to be with their families, the children all enjoy boarding. Many specifically say it is fun and parents are pleased with their children's experience.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Pencalenick is a listening school. It has a number of systems to consult children and families about school life. The School Council is very active and has boarding representation. Recent topics covered include bullying and feeling safe. Pupil's views are obtained using questionnaires. The majority of the boarders said they felt they were able to have a say about their school. Examples of changes made in response to children's views include increasing the 'extended school' programme to two nights each week and a current project to improve the playground. The school also uses questionnaires to seek family views. The results are shared in writing and through parent evenings. In addition, parents receive half term newsletters and are invited to open evenings, parent workshops and their child's annual review. Parents said they felt communication was good, in particular from the Head of Care, and that the school was good at listening and empathising. Children's care needs are assessed and each child has a written care plan. This is supplemented by a self care questionnaire, completed with the child, to incorporate their views about their needs. The Head of Care attends and contributes to boarders' care reviews. Children are able to keep in touch with their families and any professionals involved in their care.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The school has enjoyed a period of development following its success in achieving specialist status in communication and interaction. The funding made available, as a result, has allowed the school to reconfigure the main school building to release valuable space. As part of this, some of the previous dormitory accommodation has been re-located. The new boarding facilities are comfortable but there is still some work to do. However, the move is proving most successful. The dormitories are smaller and more homely; the older pupils have their own specific floor; the lounge facilities are cosy and most importantly, the children and staff are happy with the new arrangements. Much has been done to offer comfort. The boarders have new beds and bedding and there are new settees in the lounges. Most areas have been redecorated. The

bathrooms, toilets and shower rooms have been upgraded in part. The baths have been re-enamelled and heating installed. However, the tiling is basic and there are areas under the sinks which are difficult to keep clean. The sanitary ware is from a 'bygone era'. The shower cubicles, although relatively new have no private changing facilities. A few door locks are not emergency access locks and the shower rooms have no door locks. The first floor is protected by a security system which is currently restricting senior pupils from freely accessing their rooms without staff assistance but it is understood that this is being addressed.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The Headmaster and the Board of Governors take particular interest in the boarding provision and keep in contact with the Head of Care. A representative of the Responsible Individual monitors the school on behalf of the local authority. The School's Statement of Purpose is presented in a welcome pack and is accessible through its internet website. It provides some boarding information but it is not a suitable format for many of the children. Care staff have daily handover meetings and weekly staff meetings. They are well briefed on the needs of the children. There are sufficient staff on duty to meet the children's needs but staffing levels are increased if necessary. Staff engage in training and all have achieved NVQ Level 3 in Care of Children and Young People except for the two most recent recruits who are working towards this qualification. Additional training is provided when children have specific needs. However, there is no system for monitoring staff training to ensure staff are receiving sufficient training and required updates. New staff have a mentor but no formal induction training to cover essential information, for example fire safety and child protection. Every member of the boarding staff receives one to one supervision each term and staff know they can ask for additional supervision. School records are in general well maintained. Each child has their own confidential record file. The school has a range of policies and procedures to support staff but they are not always up to date with the school's practice. This is a well managed school where the children come first. Parents are satisfied and complimentary. The school is forward thinking; it strives to develop its facilities and arrangements in the children's best interests.

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):

- review the school's child protection systems - in particular the child protection policy; induction training for new staff; records systems; review systems; notifications and training for all school staff (NMS 5 & 7)
- establish a structured care staff induction programme (NMS 29.2)

- upgrade the shower room facilities to provide private changing areas and improve the decor and tiling. Ensure all door locks to toilets and bathing facilities can be opened from the exterior in an emergency (NMS 25.5)
- risk assess all boarders in terms their ability to react to a fire alarm and record fire drill practice evaluation. Ensure that appropriate action is taken to meet all the Fire Brigade requirements (NMS 26)
- update the medication policy. Review the need for all staff to maintain competency in medication administration and first aid (NMS 14.14 & 14.17)
- review and update the complaints policy. Provide children with an accessible version within a children's guide to boarding. Ensure the school has a complaints record system that can be monitored (NMS 4)
- provide children with facilities to receive and make telephone calls with acceptable levels of privacy. (NMS 24.9)

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.