

Fred Nicholson School

Inspection report for residential special school

Unique reference number	SC038284
Inspection date	5 February 2008
Inspector	Clive Lucas
Type of Inspection	Key

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Date of last inspection	23 January 2007

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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

Fred Nicholson School is a residential special school, which provides services for pupils who have complex needs. The school provides 100 places in total. 24 children board at different times of the week. At the time of the inspection, 17 children were boarding, all of these took part in the inspection. Pupils are able to board at the school for up to four nights a week. Facilities cater for boys and girls from seven to 16 years. Other facilities available to boarders include: the school gym; workshop; library and computer suite; a club room situated in the school grounds and the outdoor playground equipped with climbing frames and swings. A sensory room has recently become available and staff are waiting for training to use it. The children who stay overnight do so in dormitories for up to four children each. Girls live on the ground floor and boys, who make up the majority of boarders, on the first floor of the building. Each dormitory has a sitting area, with television, as well as shower and toilet facilities. There is also a staff office attached to each dormitory. There are staff sleeping-in facilities on each floor. Care staff are on duty in a Children's Support Unit during each classroom day to provide a sanctuary for children who are finding the educational setting stressful. This unit also has a therapeutic input for children.

Summary

This inspection was announced and looked at the key National Minimum Standards and also the accommodation (standard 24). The service has made improvements since the previous inspection. All outcome groups are good. There are good relationships between staff and children. Children enjoy boarding at the school. Some areas of improvement have been identified under Being Healthy and Staying Safe to further improve the outcomes for the children who board 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

Following the previous inspection on 23rd January 2007, recommendations were made relating to: how information was made available to boarders; training issues for staff; accommodation and facilities; recruitment; staffing and monitoring. All of these matters have been addressed to some degree. Information to children has been revised, but due to significant staff illness has not yet been fully completed. Staff training issues have been addressed and considerable progress has been made to the accommodation issues. Progress has been made in respect of recruitment, but one isolated issue was identified at this inspection. Staffing and monitoring recommendations have also been addressed.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The health needs of each child are identified and actively promoted. Medical issues are recorded and there is good liaison with health services. Staff handle individual children's health needs and personal hygiene issues sensitively, so as not to cause embarrassment to children. Dental and optical treatment remains the responsibility of the children's parents. Children remain registered with their home GP; if they become unwell at school they will return home if possible. Children can attend the local surgery as visitors if necessary. Children feel that they are well

cared for at the school. Staff are trained in first aid. There are processes in place for the administration of medicines, however there are some areas that require improvement. One medicine cabinet, located in a locked cupboard had the key left in the lock, this could reduce the security of the storage of medicines. All other cabinets were appropriately locked. As children are not full time boarders, their medicines are sent in from home with the child and return home the same way. Although parents are asked to send medicines in to the school in appropriate, labelled containers, this does not always happen and in some cases envelopes are used. The processes for managing medicines do not make any distinction for controlled drugs, which by their nature present a greater risk if misused. Parental consent is not always recorded for the administration of first aid and non-prescribed medicines.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's privacy is respected. Staff are mindful of the needs of individual children to have single rooms where possible within the limitations of the building. Staff are aware of issues of privacy as well as the need to supervise children in particular circumstances. Children can use a telephone in private if they ask staff. Complaints are recorded and appropriately responded to. Children have a mixed awareness of the complaints procedure. New material is in the process of being made available to children to tell them how to complain. However, all children who board at the school feel able to raise any issues or concerns with staff. Staff have had training in how to manage complaints made by children. The school brochure and children's guide give details on how to make a complaint, but do not have contact details for Ofsted. A pay telephone is available for children to use without first seeking staff permission; helpline telephone numbers are displayed by the telephone. Some children do not feel that this telephone is confidential because it is located in the entrance area of the school. However, they can use this telephone during boarding times when the area is quiet. Some children are not sure if they can use this telephone. The welfare of children at the school is promoted. Staff are aware of how to respond to child protection concerns or allegations and the designated member of staff for child protection has a thorough understanding of child protection matters. All staff working at the school are given information on child protection as part of their induction. The school has links with the Local Children's Safeguarding Board through the Children's Services Department. Children receive guidance from staff on issues of safety. Bullying does take place on occasions, but children are protected from it by staff recognising and dealing with it. There is not a specific risk assessment of the times, places and circumstances in which the risk of bullying is greatest. There have not been any incidents of boarders being absent from the school without authority, however there is guidance for staff on managing any such situations. There are positive and appropriate relationships between staff and children at the school. Disciplinary measures are appropriately used and good behaviour is recognised. Staff are trained in managing difficult behaviour, including restraint of children where necessary. Individual children's risk assessments contain guidance for staff on de-escalation techniques that are likely to work for that child, this allows staff to respond in the way that is most likely to have a positive result for the individual children. Records of restraint are kept and monitored by the head teacher, but do not fully meet the criteria set out in National Minimum Standard 10.9. Children are protected by the school's use of risk assessments, which cover a range of activities and trips out. Children are aware of the fire evacuation procedures. Fire drills are held regularly and fire alarms and equipment are regularly tested. Equipment such as the heating boiler is regularly serviced. Children feel safe at the school. Staff recruitment checks are carried out by Norfolk Children's Services Department. For the most part these are appropriate and consistent with the National

Minimum Standards and Department for Children Schools and Families guidance. However, some staff who started work with a Criminal Records Bureau check from a previous job had not had a Protection of Children Act (POCA) check or a List 99 check.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at school. There are good links between boarding and school staff. These links are enhanced by senior school staff and some teaching assistants working in the boarding area in the evenings and also by boarding staff running the Support Unit. This is a facility that can be used by children who are struggling to cope in school time and also (as it is so popular) as a reward for particular effort by children. Children enjoy their time in the Support Unit. Children receive good individual support from boarding staff which reflects their individual needs. Social isolation is countered by staff's awareness of children's needs and by putting them into groups where they are able to cope. They are able to contact a wide range of staff if they have any concerns or worries. Children enjoy boarding at the school.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are consulted and their views are listened to; they feel that they can have their say. Examples of how children are involved in decision making include: participation in the school council; shopping for dormitory furnishing and choices of activities. There are very positive and appropriate relationships between children and staff. Children's needs are assessed and recorded in individual placement plans. Children do not board full time and some only board for one or two nights a week. They can telephone parents with staff permission and will be allowed to take a cordless telephone to somewhere private to speak to family. Staff will supervise this only as much as is necessary in the children's best interests.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Recommendations about accommodation and furnishings that were made at the previous inspection have been addressed. The nature and age of the building mean that it could appear institutional. However, staff make efforts to reduce this by decorating and furnishing the boarding area pleasantly. This results in a better living environment for the children who board. Children are able to personalise their own space if they choose; staff recognise that some children's reluctance to put up posters and pictures can be as a result of medical conditions such as Asperger's Syndrome and allow them free choice in this.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is a school brochure that includes the school's statement of purpose. This gives a clear outline of the admission process for children to the school, but does not include the school's admission criteria. Work is taking place on revising the children's guide to give them more easily understood information of the school's statement of purpose. Staff go through the children's guide with children on a regular basis. Children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently. The staff group has been stretched recently due to sickness. However, senior school staff have been doing regular duties in the boarding time

to cover the gaps. This has had a positive impact by increasing the links between school and boarding staff, it has also ensured continuity of staffing for the children who board. Staff may work alone in a dormitory area, but other staff are on call for prompt back-up if necessary. All staff have cordless telephones with them. Children can contact a member of staff when they need to. Children receive care from experienced and competent staff. The head of care is experienced and appropriately qualified, but on long-term sick leave at the time of the inspection. Two deputy heads of care are taking on additional responsibilities in the interim. A wide range of training is provided to help staff to provide good quality and appropriate care for children. This training includes NVQ Level 3 in health and social care with a view to bringing the level of staff with this or an equivalent qualification up to the levels set out in the National Minimum Standards. The school is efficiently run, which brings benefits to the children. Monitoring by senior staff and governors takes place. The absence of the head of care has meant that there was a period when monitoring was not as frequent as planned, but the role has now been taken on by a deputy head of care.

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):

- obtain and retain on file for each child, written parental consent for the administration of first aid and appropriate non-prescribed medication. (NMS 14.10)
- keep medication securely in a locked cabinet and labelled container. (NMS 14.16)
- review the policy and guidance on administering and storing medication in respect of controlled medication and transporting medication between home and school. (NMS 14.17)
- ensure that children and families know how to make a complaint directly to Ofsted. (NMS 4.8)
- ensure that children know how to complain if they feel unhappy with any aspect of boarding at the school. (NMS 4.1)
- ensure that the record of restraints meets the criteria set out in the National Minimum Standards. (NMS 10.9)
- review the privacy of the children's pay telephone and children's awareness that they can use it. (NMS3.5)
- carry out a recorded risk assessment of the times, places and circumstances in which the risk of bullying is greatest, and take resultant action where feasible to reduce or counteract the risk. (NMS 6.5)

- ensure that all recruitment checks for staff are compliant with the National Minimum Standards and Department for Children Schools and Families guidance. (NMS 27.1)

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.