

Elemore Hall School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Darren Hobson
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Address	Elemore Hall School Littletown DURHAM DH6 1QD
Telephone number	0191 3720275
Email	
Registered person	Durham County Council
Head of care	
Head / Principal	Richard Royle
Date of last inspection	22 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

This school is a residential special school catering for children with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. The school is a converted country house in its own extensive woodland grounds. The school's residential facilities are located in the main school building and comprises two residential units, each having its own living and sleeping areas. The school provides residential care and education for children of secondary school age, 11 to 16, who have a statement of special educational need. Residential care is provided at the school from Monday to Friday during term time for up to 25 children. The school provides, as an alternative to its residential services, an extended school day service for children residing in County Durham.

Summary

The purpose of the visit to this school was to carry out an inspection of all key National Minimum Standards. National Minimum Standards were inspected in all outcome areas. The residential units at Elemore Hall School provides children with a safe, caring and enabling environment which supports their social, emotional and educational needs well. The school is strong in all outcome areas, but particularly so in Enjoying and Achieving and Positive Contribution where it is outstanding. There are some gaps in the recording of information within the sanctions and physical intervention books. Staff do not receive regular formal supervision but overall management and leadership is strong and effective and staff are well supported.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

No recommendations were identified at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

There are good systems in place which ensure safe administration of medicines to children. An audit undertaken of medicines found that all medication administered were clearly recorded and records maintained accurate. Medicines are securely stored and all residential staff have completed the safe handling of medicine and first aid training. Staff confirmed that they do not administer homely remedies and parental consent forms are maintained in respect of administering prescribed medicines and emergency treatment. Children are registered with their own doctor and children are mainly taken by their parents to health appointments, although if necessary, the school will provide transport. If children become poorly when at school then staff make arrangements for children to be taken home unless their illness is minor, then they can stay within the residential unit for a short time. These measures ensure that children's health needs are met and their welfare safeguarded. Some of the things children said about the support they receive were, 'They set a time and if we are still feeling unwell they contact our parents and send us home', and 'staff make sure you get your tablets, they do a lot for you when your poorly'. The school has appropriate systems in place to record accidents and medical interventions relating to children. The school provides children with a good, healthy, balanced and nutritious diet which promotes their health and physical well-being. The school has achieved the 'healthy schools' award in recognition of the steps it has taken to develop healthy lifestyles for children. Two meals were taken with children and were tasty, well presented and made from

fresh produce. Menus are well planned and there is always a vegetarian choice available. The school kitchen has good systems in place for ensuring that it meets the requirements of food safety legislation. Records of all foods cooked, temperatures and refrigerated storage are well maintained and a good system of cyclical cleaning was seen to be in place. Fresh fruit and healthy low sugar drinks are available from the tuck shop and in residence. Children reported very positively about meals and snacks they receive. Comments included, 'Elemore School makes sure everyone eats healthy stuff because they don't cook fatty foods' and 'we always get people encouraging us to eat, cook and buy healthy foods'.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Records about children are securely stored and confidentially maintained. Child protection records are only accessed by nominated senior staff and on a need to know basis. Children said, 'Staff don't talk to children about other children.' Most children reported that there was someone within the school whom they talk to if they had a problem. They also said that their privacy is respected by staff who were observed knocking on children's doors and waiting for an answer before entering children's bedrooms. The school has good systems in place for recording and dealing with children's complaints. Children spoken to knew how to complain and it was observed that complaints information is displayed throughout the residential units. The school has very good policies and procedures for dealing with abuse which ensures that children's welfare is effectively safeguarded. Staff interviewed demonstrated a good understanding of these procedures and know what to do if they suspect a child is being abused. Staff said they had all received child protection training and this was confirmed during an audit of staff records. Copies of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) guidelines are available to staff as is the county council education department's child protection procedures for schools. Children said that they felt safe at the school and that staff 'give you loads of protection and advice'. The anti-bullying policy is good. Elemore Hall School has robust systems in place to record and monitor incidents of bullying through its major incident form system. There were 14 incidents of bullying recorded by the school during the last term although none were reported within residence. Most children said that bullying does happen at the school but that staff deal with such incidents effectively. Good systems are in place to report children who go missing and this is monitored through the major incident reporting system. The school's policy includes information about debriefing children upon return and staff interviewed demonstrated a good level of knowledge about this. It was noted that no children had gone missing from residence since the last inspection. There are good and effective systems in place to support children in developing good behaviour and citizenship. During the period of inspection, no incidents of disruptive behaviour were observed. Children and staff were seen to have very good and mutually respectful relationships underpinned by an ethos of support, care and trust. Systems to record and monitor physical interventions by staff are very effective. Major incident forms are comprehensively completed, however, the physical intervention book is not always fully completed due to not being signed and dated on all occasions. There is very effective monitoring of all physical interventions by the local authority through its Standard 33 monitoring visits. This monitoring shows that the level of physical intervention is decreasing. All staff are trained in team teach techniques with the school placing a great emphasis on diversion and de-escalation with physical restraint being used as a last resort. Children interviewed said, 'I have never seen any restrained on the unit. They (the staff) try everything to calm it down before they restrain' and 'I have never seen anyone restrained in residence and I have been here for five years'. An audit of the sanction book found that there were some gaps in the recording of sanctions given

to children. Additionally, although most sanctions were appropriate, a number were recorded as 'sent home'. This sanction, a form of unofficial exclusion, if used outside of a recorded and agreed strategy within a behaviour plan, does not give children and their parents the rights and protection within the law that a formal exclusion gives. The school has comprehensive systems in place to record, monitor and prevent risks to health and safety. Regular checks are made of fire and safety equipment and fittings and fire drills are held during the day and at night. One young person was able to give a very full and accurate explanation of the procedures to be followed by children in case of fire. Effective recruitment procedures are in place to ensure staff employed are suitable to work with children. An audit of staff personnel files found that most checks, such as an enhanced criminal records bureau checks, references and gaps in employment are made. However, the school does not routinely record that it has confirmed with referees that they have written the reference. This measure, if implemented, would further ensure the suitability of staff to safeguard children's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Residence provides children with excellent support and actively promotes children's educational progress. The school operates an extended day where residential pupils and day pupils can access the school's facilities and support after formal lessons have ended. Particularly commendable is the additional support for GCSE subjects which are offered on most evenings. One of the pupils case tracked was observed attending a GCSE history support class. Children spoken to were enthusiastic about the support they received. One young person said, 'there is loads of help for us, I do history and cookery GCSE extra classes in residence' while another said, 'I get all the support I need when I am at school and college, I can't thank them enough for what they have helped me with the last four years'. Children access an extensive range of meaningful leisure activities in school and within the community. Children spoke of the support they receive to access hobbies and clubs within their own communities such as being transported to and from external activities such as football, boxing and martial arts. Residential provision is arranged, wherever possible, so that it does not impact upon children's home leisure activities, and where it does good arrangements are put in place to ensure children continue to access these. Support to individual children is excellent. Each child at the school has a personal tutor who actively liaises with parents and external agencies to ensure that the child's needs are met. Children are extensively involved in the arrangements made for them. Each term, a personal achievement meeting is held with the child, their parents, personal tutor and where appropriate, external agencies to review progress and set new targets for the coming term. Some of the things children said about these meetings were, 'I am always involved in my meetings and deciding what happens in my life' and 'you have a personal tutor, they talk to you all the time but you can talk to anyone, they all will listen and try and help you with your problems'. In addition to these meetings, children attend and contribute to the annual review of their statement of special educational needs.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Elemore Hall School has excellent arrangements in place to consult with children. In addition to the personal achievement meetings, which are focused on individual needs, there is a school council to support and address issues raised by individuals or groups of children. The council is made up of representatives of each class group and receives a budget of £1,000 per term.

This money can be used by the council to purchase equipment or support specific activities. It can also be used to repair or replace equipment which has been damaged through vandalism, making the council members aware of and taking some responsibility for the wider impacts upon the running of their school. One young person who is a school councillor said, 'well I am a school councillor so have a lot to say about what happens at Elemore, but I intend to make the school as interesting as I can'. The school undertakes an annual quality assurance questionnaire with children and their parents about the care, support and education children receive. Responses are generally very positive and information from these is used by the school's management as part of its monitoring and evaluation processes. The school produces an interesting and very good quality newsletter. Most of the articles included are contributions from children and the new letter is circulated to all parents, governors, community groups and officers with the local authority. This is a further example of how children can share their experiences at Elemore Hall School and its impacts upon them with the wider community. Very effective care and placement planning arrangements for children ensure that their physical, emotional, social and educational needs are met. Children's files include all of the information required by the National Minimum Standards. Information about progress made by individual children is extensive. Annual reports to parents are very informative and give a comprehensive picture as to how children are performing and how children's individual needs are being met by the school. Good systems are in place to review children's needs through the annual review of the statement of special educational needs and termly personal achievement meetings. Children said that they are encouraged to maintain links with their families and friends. Children can talk to parents by telephone, either by using the children's phone located in each unit, or as most prefer using the staff phone. Comments from children included, 'yes I do ring my dad every night I am here, you can make private calls in your bedroom on the staff phone' and 'I can meet up with my friends anytime I want and there is nothing stopping my friends coming to visit me either'. Effective systems are in place to monitor all visits and contact made and to restrict contact where this is agreed and in the interest of the child.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Children about to leave the school receive excellent support for the transition into independence. A member of staff oversees and coordinates transitional arrangements, maintaining close links with local colleges and the connexions service. The units are equipped with domestic appliances and equipment which is used to teach children independence skills. Children spoke positively of the support they received, 'loads of support, help with learning to cook, we do washing and ironing' and 'staff work with us to teach us to be independent, we learn to use public transport'. The residential units located on the first and second floor of the main building provide sufficient space and facilities to meet the needs of children at the school. However, the school's accommodation is unsuitable for children with physical disabilities as the building has not been adapted for disabled access. The residential units are domestically furnished and well maintained and provides adequate facilities. Children's bedrooms are personalised and meet the required standard. Washing and bathing facilities provided are sufficient in number and meet the privacy and personal care needs of children.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The school's Statement of Purpose and leaflet provided to parents includes adequate information about the school and how it operates. Recording systems within the school are generally maintained to a high standard. There are some gaps in recording of sanctions and restraints within the books used for this purpose. Records relating to children's care needs are comprehensive and give a detailed picture of children's needs, how the school addresses these and the progress children make. The residential units are staffed and managed by mainly qualified staff who are well trained and experienced in meeting the social and emotional needs of children resident. Staff said that they are well supported in their roles and senior management are accessible and provide strong leadership. It was found, however, that the school does not have a system for regular and formal supervision of staff. Relationships between staff and children are very good and this contributes to the school's strong ethos of providing a safe, caring, supportive and enabling environment for all. There are robust internal and external monitoring systems which ensures the effective and efficient running of the school. Children and parents actively contribute towards this monitoring through quality assurance questionnaires, the school council and regular children's progress meetings. Monthly monitoring by the local authority of all major incidents contributes towards safeguarding children's welfare.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that recordings made within physical intervention book are complete (NMS 10)
- ensure that only permissible sanctions are given to children and a full and accurate record is maintained (NMS 10)
- ensure that arrangements for the verification of staff references are routinely undertaken (NMS 10)
- ensure that formal arrangements are in place for staff to receive supervision and a record is kept of these meetings (NMS 30)

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.