

# Limpsfield Grange School

Inspection report for residential special school

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## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

## **Service information**

### **Brief description of the service**

The school is situated within the residential area of Limpsfield in Oxted, Surrey. According to its prospectus, it is a small Residential Special School catering for girls between the ages of 11 and 16 with emotional and learning difficulties. The school was built in the 1880's as a family home and still retains many of its original features. The boarding facilities within the school are situated on the first floor and the girls are suitably separated in terms of age groups. The grounds surrounding the school are well maintained, safe and secure. In addition, the school has a tennis court, gymnasium and swimming pool, and an award winning smallholding and gardens that are available to all of the pupils.

### **Summary**

This announced key inspection was conducted over two days by one inspector. All of the key standards for Residential Special Schools were inspected, as well as a number of others and the recommendations made from the previous report were followed up. Key personnel were interviewed, records were scrutinised and the girls were joined for all meals. Groups of girls were also interviewed and surveys were received from boarders and a number of parents. The new head teacher and existing head of care have ensured that the previous recommendations have been implemented. They continue to work closely and are reviewing all policies and procedures. The school is judged to be a good provider and a number of aspects of service provision, such as relationships between staff and pupils, are outstanding. A number of shortfalls are identified within the text of this report; the most immediate issue concerns recent placements being made, which are currently outside of the school's prescribed admissions criteria.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

There are four recommendations that were made from the previous inspection visit and these have all been implemented. Administrative tasks regarding medication administration have improved; such recordings now show no errors. The new catering manager ensures that menus are widely advertised and engages in much direct consultation with the girls. The child protection policy and procedure has been satisfactorily reviewed and updated. In addition to these, the school has worked hard to implement improvements of its own. The new head teacher are systematically reviewing all policies and procedures relating to the boarding provision and continue to campaign for improvements to be made with regards to the physical environment. The behaviour management policy and procedure has been updated and the girls are particularly positive about this improvement.

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

The provision is good.

The primary health needs of boarders are being met. Clear policy and procedural guidance on health promotion is being implemented in practice. Medicines are securely stored and are being safely administered. Staff receive medication administration and first aid training. Care files hold written parental consent for treatment and a clear list of homely remedies is communicated to them for their approval. Current medical conditions and allergies are known and are being effectively monitored. A number of care files show concerns about mental health and behavioural

needs. This is a recent development and there is a lack of evidence detailing that appropriate external support is being provided. A new catering manager was appointed in December 2007. The girls report very positively about this appointment. He routinely engages in direct consultation with the pupils and continues to introduce new foods, particularly vegetables into the daily meals. Biscuits at break time have been replaced with fresh fruit and the girls particularly value Wednesdays, whereby lunch time is dedicated to a wide variety of salads. The use of frozen and processed foods has drastically reduced and the girls are assisting with the ongoing expansion of a herb garden. Meals are nutritious and wholesome. The dining room has recently been redecorated and all of the girls eat in here at lunch time, over two separate sittings. Breakfast and tea is prepared within the main school kitchen; however, it is transported to the boarding areas by staff and the girls. The boarders say they prefer to have these meals within their own living areas; however, there is limited space for everyone to sit together at the table in the senior provision and the carrying of foods and utensils up and down flights of stairs presents health and safety risks. The requirements made from the most recent environmental health visit have been fully implemented and the catering manager receives clear information about any allergies and special dietary requirements.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff implement clear procedural guidance, which serves to protect boarders' privacy. Sensitive and confidential information is securely stored and appropriately shared. The complaints procedure is readily advertised throughout the school and boarders say the staff deal with their issues quickly and to their satisfaction. The procedure is not clearly described within the pupil handbook and does not currently contain details on contacting Ofsted. Staff receive ongoing child protection training and they all know how to report concerns and to whom. The head of care is the school's designated child protection officer. The policy and procedure is clear and up to date and written records show details of appropriate liaison and consultation with local social services safeguarding team. Boarders report occasional instances of low level bullying, such as name calling and being unkind. They further confirm that staff intervene readily and appropriately. They feel protected. The countering bullying policy was updated in November 2007 and a recent awareness campaign has resulted in much art work displayed around the school, carrying the message that bullying is unacceptable. The policy lacks detail in terms of the overall monitoring of incidents, with regards identifying patterns and trends. Procedural guidance on dealing with unauthorised absences and girls leaving the school site without permission is clear and is being implemented in practice. General attendance is good and continues to be robustly monitored. Recent omissions concerning notifications to Ofsted have been satisfactorily rectified. A new behaviour management policy has been written and is currently out for consultation with staff and parents. Pupils have already been consulted and their dissatisfaction with the previous points system was a contributing factor to this change. The girls feel very positive about being listened to. A list of prescribed sanctions is in place. These are appropriate and are being consistently applied. Boarders say they understand why such sanctions are used and feel that they are fair. The school does not currently have a policy detailing the use of physical intervention. Given the historic presenting needs of the pupils, it was not deemed to be necessary; however, a number of instances of more challenging behaviours have recently occurred and individual behaviour management plans are being devised. The overall school site offers good security and protection through the use of CCTV and entrance doors are alarmed at night. The site manager implements sound and robust processes, which include a full premises health and safety audit every half term. Detailed risk assessments include

fire, the swimming pool, hazardous substances and activities. Fire drills are routinely practised and these occur during the day and night. All hot water taps are thermostatically controlled and they are also manually tested as an added safeguard. All first floor windows are suitably restricted and radiators within boarding areas are covered. The girls know that they are required to present all of their own electrical equipment for testing; however, there are occasional instances of untested items being discovered. The recruitment policy and procedure describes a rigorous and robust process. Personnel files contain evidence of Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checking, written references and interview records. Not all references are being followed up by telephone verification and CRB checks are not currently repeated.

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

The provision is good.

The boarding team provides additional learning opportunities and actively supports educational attainment. Care files hold clear details of educational targets and these are used to inform social care plans. Boarders enjoy good access to school resources during boarding time, such as a well equipped library and the computer suite. This is used to run a homework club, facilitated by a teacher. Teaching and boarding staff engage in regular verbal handovers; however, there is no current formal process, outside of annual reviews for these teams to regularly review progress. Boarders speak very positively about activity provision. Common rooms are equipped with televisions, DVD players and music systems. Books and board games are in good supply. The school has its own swimming pool and the recently constructed youth club building is very popular. External activities include accessing the wider community, such as shopping and going to the cinema. During the course of the evening, different groups of girls were observed to use the library, attend homework club, go into the local town and make badges. Boarders say they enjoy positive relationships with the staff. They say that the boarding team and teachers provide them with good levels of support. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) visits girls in their final year of primary and conducts individual sessions where this is needed. Good links remain with local colleges and Connexions. A new independent listener has been appointed by the National Youth Advisory Service (NYAS); some of the girls are unclear as to her role, but they know who the regular standard 33 visitor is and say they can talk to her if they want to. There is a lack of input from external sources with regards to the presenting of behavioural difficulties of some of the girls, both for the girls through direct work and for the staff team in terms of prescribed guidance and training.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

A number of consultation forums are available to the boarders. The student council membership includes day girls and boarders and meets each half term. Comments from the girls as to its value are variable. They are more positive about the catering manager and confirm that he engages in regular consultation with them. The girls were very unhappy with the previous points behaviour system and are very pleased that their views have directly impacted upon the new policy. The majority feel that they are listened to and taken seriously. Comments made about the boarding team are positive. Older boarders say, 'they do try to treat you like adults, you can talk to them.' Direct observations of working practice shows staff interacting warmly and appropriately with those in their care. Girls join the school in a planned and sensitive manner. This starts with visits to their primary schools by the SENCO. Care plans are produced using assessment information and the girls directly contribute to these, as well as to their annual

reviews. Care plans follow a clear format and the girls understand the process. One example does not show a clear correlation towards educational targets and the social targets described within are not clearly being reflected within the daily notes. The admissions criteria is currently being revised and updated. The school is currently taking pupils outside of its prescribed categories. This is directly linked to the closure of a local authority residential provision and is having an unsettling effect on the remainder of the school's populous. The school operates weekly boarding, although some pupils do not stay for the full week. A number of girls have been identified as needing additional nights; however, this necessitates a local authority panel meeting in order for a decision to be made. This process does not occur within other Surrey schools. The majority of boarders have their own mobile telephones and a private payphone is also available for their exclusive use to maintain contact with their families and friends. They can also use email and say that there are no difficulties in contacting their parents whilst staying at school. In addition, school policy states that boarders must be given access to a private telephone should they request to contact their home.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is satisfactory.

Boarders change into their own clothes at the end of the school day and they are able to obtain the personal requisites they may need. Whilst discouraged from bringing in large amounts of money and items of specific value, the school assists with the safe-keeping and distribution of pocket money where this is needed. Boarders also have their own lockable storage space. At present, no boarder is being 'looked after' by their own placing authority; however, the boarding team encourages the acquisition of independence skills with regards to older girls. Progress in this area is hampered due to the physical environment and the school is exploring possible options within its current site. Accommodation for boarders is situated on the first floor of the main school building. Due to its age, the building was not designed with modern boarding provision in mind. Girls are adequately separated in terms of their age and staff have worked very hard to create a warm and homely environment. The site manager has redecorated a number of areas, following consultation with the girls. There are no separate bedrooms; girls share dormitories and these accommodate varying numbers. There is a sufficient number of toilets and bathrooms, which are cleaned to a good standard. The junior and senior common rooms are adequately furnished. These areas are cramped when filled to capacity, particularly the senior provision. Due to a lack of space within the school, common rooms are being used during the day to accommodate individual work, such as speech and language therapy sessions. Boarders are not happy with this arrangement. It compromises their privacy and is an invasion of their designated space.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The school's prospectus offers clear and detailed information; however, the presenting needs of newer pupils are outside of the service description. The pupil handbook contains appropriate details and the girls say they understand its contents. Regular newsletters are sent to parents and they have very recently been asked for their views about the revised behaviour management policy. Mandatory training courses for the boarding team remain up to date and include child protection, food hygiene, fire safety and first aid. The head of care is suitably qualified and experienced and a rolling programme of NVQ training is in place for the rest of the team. Care staff understand their roles and responsibilities; all have written job descriptions and there are

clear arrangements in place for deputising. Supervision and appraisal systems are sufficient and staff members are able to request to attend specific courses, which are deemed to further enable the staff to meet the needs of the children. The presenting needs of some of the newer admissions have not yet influenced training provision. Staff members from ethnic minority backgrounds are under represented and there are no males on the boarding team. Improved internal monitoring systems are robust and the standard 33 visitor conducts routine unannounced visits. Her reports are detailed, specific and clear, and they address relevant issues and areas needing development. The head teacher has a clear vision with regards ongoing development and operates a clear, inclusive management style, which is positively received by the staff team.

## 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 the mental health and psychological needs of the girls are accurately and sufficiently provided for (NMS 14).
- explore greater opportunities for older girls to provide their own meals (NMS 15).
- update the complaint's policy to include Ofsted details and ensure this is featured within the pupil handbook (NMS 4).
- review the countering bullying policy to ensure responsibility is given to monitor and review incidents. This information is to be used to inform risk assessments in establishing any patterns and trends (NMS 6).
- consider the need to further review behaviour management guidance, with particular regards towards challenging behaviours (NMS 10).
- formalise handovers and review meetings between the teaching and boarding teams
- reinforce the role of the independent listener (NMS 22).
- review the role and function of the student council and consult with the girls as to its value (NMS 2).
- review the admissions criteria and the process for offering a boarding placement as a matter of priority (NMS 11).
- ensure daily care notes accurately reflect care plan targets (NMS 17).
- explore greater opportunities to equip the girls with independence skills (NMS 21).
- submit plans detailing how the lack of space within common rooms will be rectified and desist from using these areas for other purposes (NMS 23).



- submit plans, including a timescale, detailing the school's continued development of its boarding provision (NMS 23).
- upgrade and replace the older furniture within boarding areas and continue with ongoing redecoration (NMS 24).
- review the school prospectus in order that it accurately described the needs of the pupils currently accommodated (NMS 1).
- conduct a review of staff's changing training needs and implement plans to meet these needs (NMS 31).
- provide those staff involved in recruitment with training on equal opportunities and valuing diversity (NMS 31).

## 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)

**Annex A**

- 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.**