

# Notton House School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	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**

Notton House is a well established residential school for up to 55 boys aged nine to 16 with emotional and behavioural difficulties. All pupils referred to the school have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. The school occupies a rural situation in Wiltshire. It is, however, owned and operated by Bristol City Council. Notton House has responded positively to the demands of the National Minimum Standards and continues to develop its practice and provision.

### **Summary**

The school has clear policies and procedures in place for safeguarding young people. There are some gaps in the recording process at the school. The current levels of staff sickness is effecting the moral of some staff and also some of the individual support systems in place for young people such as key working and independence work are not happening as often as the school would like. The school has a robust pro-active anti bullying system in place and good positive reward systems for young people. Parents and young people feel that they are fully involved in the plans made for individual young people at the school. Parents spoken too said they felt the communication between the school and themselves is very good. Health care at the school is good and young people are provided with a good variety of foods and healthy food choices. The accommodation the school offers is of a good standard and provides the young people with an adequate amount of communal space. The new build which contains a sports hall has added to this.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

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

The school has developed its child protection procedure. They have also introduced new guidance for the handling of soiled laundry in line with infection control guidelines. This includes the purchase in laundry bags which will disintegrate once in the washing machine. The dosette boxes used to administer young people's individual medication are now clearly labelled with the dosage information as well as the young person's name. Fire practice at the school has been reviewed and now covers all the required safety checks and the recording of such including the training of staff. The school recruitment procedures have improved.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Promotion of health is taken seriously and young people's welfare is closely monitored and their health needs met. Children live in a healthy environment and their individual health and care needs are met. Young people said that they were well looked after if they were unwell. Parents supported this view and said that they were kept well informed of their son's health and any related issues. They also said that the school provided support and help if they were not able to take their sons to any medical appointments. The school keeps clear health records and there is clear evidence of young people's visits to doctors and dentists. Individual health records were detailed and contained all the relevant information required. All necessary consent forms were evident to cover this provision. Staff said that there are issues in obtaining regular visits to local dentists due to list being closed at dental surgeries locally. However, they said there was no trouble accessing appointments for emergency treatment. Medication is either

obtained locally or via parents or consultants. The school does not ensure that dosage of medications is only changed when they have received written instruction by the prescribing GP or consultant. Controlled drugs are recorded and stocks in the houses restricted. Medication administration records are used and correctly completed for all children. The school uses dosette boxes to dispense medication to individual young people. These are appropriately labelled with the individual's name and the medication dosage. All staff had received medication administration training. Refresher training by the school's nurse is planned to take place before July 2008. There is a large stock of controlled drugs held for individual young people and current storage facilities are not appropriate. An appropriate medical cabinet had been ordered along with a computer for the surgery. The school has appropriate systems and procedures in place to work with young people who bed wet. This includes the use of laundry bags which can be placed into the washing machine and disintegrate thus reducing the possibility of cross contamination should soiling be the result of an infection. First Aid boxes are held in each classroom, the surgery, mini-buses and the kitchens. There are seven staff who are first aid trained. The school ensure that there is always one of these members of staff on duty. Non-prescription homely remedies are used within an agreed protocol and parental permission is obtained for this procedure. Accidents in the school are appropriately recorded in the surgery log. Staff accidents are recorded and held by the Bursar. All aspects of personal, social and health education is taught in school but this generates some homework and so residential staff are also involved. Young people are provided with healthy and nutritious meals. Food is plentiful and prepared to a very good standard. The requirements of young people on special diets or with religious needs are met. The preferences of young people are surveyed periodically and taken into account when preparing the menu. They are also able to put their views forward via the school council which meets regularly this is then passed to the kitchen staff. Young people spoken to said that they like the food at the school and that there was always more than enough. Parents agreed with this and one said that the school had been very supportive of her son's dietary needs. They felt these had been handled with sensitivity. Mealtimes were observed to be pleasant social occasions and the young people carry out assigned tasks of serving and clearing tables. The dining room is suitable in size and has a friendly atmosphere. Information on healthy eating is provided on the notice boards for young people to read. The kitchen had an inspection by an environmental health officer on 7 November 2007. At the time of inspection there was still one outstanding action to be resolved. Also within the kitchen there is an inappropriate system in place to open the kitchen windows. Staff said they were unable to use this system as they were not strong enough to pull the window open using the cord system. What they currently do is to stand in the kitchen sink to open the window. This present a lot of health and safety issues. There is also an area where dish washing takes place which presents difficulties in cleaning and could present a health risk. The Head said that work on both of these items was scheduled. COSHH requirements are being met and there are clear records of fridge and freezer temperatures kept.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people said that staff respected their privacy. They said staff always knocked and wait before coming into their bedrooms. The school has guidance for staff on respecting young people's privacy and confidentiality. Interviews with staff confirmed they had a clear understanding of these and actioned them. Sanitary and bathing facilities within the boarding provision permit privacy for the pupils. The school has installed 'stay on' lights in some of the bathrooms so as to minimise a potential area for bullying. Young people's personal files are

kept in a locked filing cabinet in a secure room. Care plan files with current details are kept in the staffroom. The Staff Handbook is clear that such files must remain confidential. The Handbook includes helpful guidance on information sharing and recording within the school. The school has an appropriate complaints procedure and log. Information on raising concerns or complaints is included in the young person's handbook and the information provided for parents. The staff handbook contains details of how staff should respond to concerns raised by boarders. Briefing on this is included in the induction of new workers. The young people interviewed were clear on what to do if they had a complaint as were the parents spoken too. None of the parents had had cause to make a complaint. They said that anything they were unsure of or unclear on they speak to staff. Young people said they too would speak to staff first about anything they were unhappy with. They felt this would be taken seriously and sorted out quickly as they felt staff really listen to them. The school has an appropriate child protection procedure. Information regarding this is included in the staff handbook, together with a procedure for staff who may need to respond to an allegation or disclosure. The school has developed a good working relationship with the local child protection service as well as those in Bristol. Staff initially receive child protection as part of their induction briefing. They then go on to attend full child protection training. The school said that staff are engaged in inset training days on child protection approximately every two years. A training inset is scheduled for the summer term. Notton House has an extremely well thought out pro-active approach to bullying, derived from the behaviour of the young people. There are clear policies and procedures plus helpful guidance for key workers and house parents. Counselling resources are used for bullies and the bullied. Half termly, both young people and staff are given questionnaires to complete regarding bullying hotspots and individuals. These are followed up with any necessary changes to procedures and with those who have been identified as bullies or those being bullied. Young people said that where bullying does happen staff quickly respond and resolve the issue. They said they would tell staff if they were bullied or saw someone else being bullied. Young people said that they felt safe at the school. The school has a clear policy and procedure for the reporting of notification to the relevant bodies. Staff interviewed had a working knowledge of these. The school has a procedure that has been agreed with the local police for informing them when a child is confirmed as having absconded. Staff said that local police respond quickly to situations where young people abscond. There are detailed absconding procedures in the staff handbook, which should be complied with on noticing the absence of a child. These details are also included in the abscond log including police contact numbers. A checklist is completed to confirm that the relevant people have been informed. Notton House has clear policies and procedures on behaviour management. There are clearly defined ranges of rewards and sanctions. The staff handbook states who is able to implement these sanctions. Sanctions are standardised and there is little scope and no authority for staff to use idiosyncratic punishments. The school has a comprehensive system of points to encourage positive behaviour and this is used in school and in the residential units. All staff and young people asked demonstrated a clear understanding of the system. Young people are able to save points towards special trips out for example, to a theme park and these events were advertised on the common room notice board. Young people said that they really liked the points system and were proud of the points they had received. Parent also said they felt this system worked well. Restraint training is provided for staff on a rolling training programme. The school has a computerised system to record restraints and this produces a quarterly breakdown that helps to identify patterns or trends that may be developing. However, there was no evidence of what actions had been identified to combat these trends. There are also separate logs kept in the Lower and Upper School regarding the use of physical restraint. These did not always contain all the required information including a

comprehensive description of the behaviours which lead to the restraint. Young people are also asked to sign and contribute to these records. These records are regularly monitored by the senior management team but the gaps in recording had not been highlighted by this monitoring. There had been a marked increase in the number of the restraints in the lower school. Staff said they felt this was due to a number of new young people being admitted within a short time scale. Young people mentioned said that they usually had a key work session following restraint. The school has a 'timeout' room which is used to provide young people with space and time to calm down. Use of this room is strictly monitored and can only be used with the approval of a member of the senior management team. The school has a comprehensive risk assessments process. Risk assessments are done on activities undertaken by children, including those undertaken with appropriately qualified leaders. The school obtains consent forms for general activities, specific trips and motor biking. Risk assessments are undertaken for all other required aspects. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed. The school has a clear Health and Safety and COSHH policy and information. Fire records demonstrated that the appropriate tests and checks are carried out at the required times. The school has recently developed a system for training and recording evidence of staff having received regular fire prevention training. Young people were clear on what they needed to do if the fire alarms sounded. They also said that the fire drills were carried out at different times of the day. There was evidence of water temperature checks, PAT testing of electrical equipment and gas installed equipment being tested earlier this year. Water temperatures are checked with regard to concern for legionella. Eight staff files were inspected. These contained the majority of the information required. These had improved since the last inspection. There were two areas which still need work. There was no evidence on some of the files of verbal contact being made with referees to confirm the reference given. Also some of the interview notes were scant.

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

The provision is good.

An attendance register is kept. This is monitored by an education welfare officer. Good liaison was evident between teaching and care staff. Both groups of workers are involved in contributing to the reviews of children. Behavioural issues are addressed consistently across a 24-hour curriculum. The school has various forums for the sharing of information between education and residential provision. Keyworkers meet with young people's teachers on a regular basis and residential staff do help in the classrooms when required. The education staff have a meeting every day and minutes are provided for the residential meeting which takes place later in the day. Minutes from this meeting are not provided for the education meeting on the following morning. The Connexions advisor is in the school one day per week, works one day in the community and undertakes some project work. The project which will commence soon will be a 10 week project for parents which will provide support for parents. Other work undertaken is on drug awareness, behaviours, community cohesion and diversity. They have undertaken a survey of ex young people and are using the results of this to inform current practice. The school provides the young people with a wide range of activities. They are able to choose from several options each evening, although there was some adverse comment about the sameness of the activities. The variety offered is enhanced by the availability of a larger gymnasium and the adjacent field that the school has acquired. Young people normally return home at weekends but a programme of weekend activities and outings is available for those who remain. The school also has activity weekends and offers activities during some of the holidays so as to offer support to the young people and their families. The boarders have access to television, videos and video games. All videos and video games are checked so as to make

sure they are age appropriate. Young people said that there was always a lot to do but they felt that during the winter months, although there was still a good range, it could sometimes get a bit 'samie'. Some young people access the local youth clubs and cadets or those local to their homes which the school provides transport for. Young people receive individualised support as required. Files examined gave evidence of Placement Plans, Individual Education Plans and Statements of Special Educational Needs. In some young people's files there was evidence of extra support plans being put in place where a need for this had been identified. There was evidence of aims and targets set, which were agreed with and signed by the young people, and of key work sessions occurring, usually weekly, to facilitate progress towards these goals. The school also works with an Inclusion Officer and a Connexions worker to give additional support to young people. All the young people have key workers and young people said that they felt these people were very important to them. Key working sessions take place on a regular basis. However these are not happening as often as the school would wish due to pressures on staff due to staff shortages.

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

The provision is good.

Young people are able to express their views at house and school council meetings, and during key work sessions. The minutes of the school council meetings provided evidence of things being changed and reviewed as a result of these meetings. Parents spoken to were very positive and spoke of good communication between home and the school and of being consulted about procedures within the school. The school said they are looking at developing the current parents evenings so they include more consultation. Young people and their parents are involved in all plans, reviews and targets. Young people said that they felt they were fully involved in what was being planned for them. The school has a bullying survey whose data can lead to the identification of specific boarders who may bully and times of day where bullying is more likely to occur. These surveys involve the whole school, staff and all young people. Young people and the parents interviewed said that they felt their relationships with staff were very important to them. During the inspection it was observed that the staff treat the young people with respect and take time to stop and listen to them. Young people said they felt they were well looked after by the staff and parents supported this view. Staff had recently undergone Team Teach training where one of the main focus was on positive responses to behaviours. The school has a thorough admissions process for the young people. Admissions take into account both the new young people and the existing young people at the school. This includes pre-admission visits to the school and a home visit where possible. Prospective young people and their families are shown around the school and the decision to offer a place is dependent upon the young person's commitment. Young people are involved in planning for formal reviews and are expected to attend them. The keyworker system facilitates young people expressing their views. The transfer from the Lower School to one of the Upper School groups is managed to reduce the possibility of rejection by the new group. Support is offered to the young person during and after the move. During the inspection some of the new young people were interviewed. They said they felt the introduction process was good. They found it useful to come and see where they would be living and who would be looking after them before the move in. They said it helped them be less nervous. The school is sensitive to the cultural and religious needs of pupils from minority ethnic groups. The school is able to access the resources of the specialist support teams in Bristol for advice and also takes into account the views of relevant relatives. Of the nine young people's files inspected all had the appropriate placement plans and care plans and reviews of these plans had happened at the appropriate intervals. There was evidence within



these plans of young people's views being sought and incorporated as were those of their parents. Young people and parents spoken to said they felt fully involved in all the plans and reviews of plans that took place. Young people were able to say what was in their plans. Boarders are encouraged to maintain contact with their homes during the week. Parental contact is only restricted when required by Court direction and recorded in the individual young person's plans. Some young people are at the school on a flexi boarding basis. The school holds a number of parents evenings throughout the year. Parents said they felt the communication with the school is very good. All felt they were kept well informed and if they contacted the school and were unable to speak to who they wanted to their call would be returned by that person as soon as possible.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Boarders return to their own homes at weekly, or at the most, fortnightly intervals. There are also some young people who do flexi boarding. Parents are therefore able to keep them supplied with clothing. Pupils wear their own choice of clothes out of school hours. Uniforms are supplied by the school. The school will also in certain circumstances supply the boarder with casual clothing. Staff will lock valuables away at the request of young people. Young people's pocket money goes into their own accounts in cash boxes, which are kept in the safe. Clear records are kept. There was evidence of work on independence with some of the older young people. This included budgeting menu planning and cooking. These plans had not been consistently used again due to staff shortages. Young people involved in this programme said that they really enjoyed it and wanted to do more. The school's Asdan programme also looks at independence. This includes journey planning. There are no outstanding requirements from the fire or planning but there is one action outstanding from the environmental health authorities, as previously mentioned in this report. The boarding accommodation is secured at night. Accommodation is divided between the modern, purpose built, Lower School and the Upper School, which is in the original manor house. The Lower School is well decorated, with comfortable furniture. Bedrooms are mainly double with some single provision. There is sufficient provision of leisure space and a dining area for breakfast and informal meals. The fire doors in the school's corridors are linked to the fire alarm system and are controlled by electro-magnetically operated release mechanisms. Residential accommodation in the Upper School is divided into five small units, each clustered around communal lounge and kitchen facilities. Bedrooms are usually occupied by two or four young people, with some single provision. Although the older building presents maintenance challenges it is in good decorative order. Young people are able to and are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms. The number of bathrooms and lavatories is sufficient and young people did not report concerns about queuing. Privacy is safeguarded. The bathrooms are fitted and decorated to a high standard. The school has had slightly sloping floors fitted to the bathrooms which have a drain fitted under the baths to prevent flooding. All the taps in the sinks are push taps to also avoid flooding. Some of the toilets are fitted with auto lights so as to avoid dark spots where bullying may occur or where younger boarders may be frightened.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The school has a clear Statement of Purpose which is available in the parent and staff handbook. It sets out the aims, principles and ethos of the school. Both handbooks are easy to read and

the young people version is written in an appropriate style and level of understanding. The children's files are stored securely and contain all the required information. The school also uses a 'blue book' which are individual books which provide a contemporaneous record of the young person's stay at the school. In the book there were some gaps in the recording, and some of the dates were incorrect. Also some of these entries were not signed. All records are archived securely in the school when young people leave. Some of the young people spoken to said that they had looked at information in their files and other said that they knew they could if they wanted to. Young people said they also discuss the contents of their daily logs, restraint record forms, and suspension information with their key workers. They are encouraged to make written submissions on a pupil Contribution form to their annual reviews. The school maintains a register of pupils. There is a complete list of present and past staff, with reasons for leaving. The staff rota adequately covers the school. Despite an increase in the staffing numbers over recent years due to staff sickness the staff levels can be at the school's minimum staff levels. If all the staff team were on rota this would provide good levels of staffing. However, due to the levels of sickness this has had a knock on effect on the staff and morale at the inspection of some staff was low. Staff interviewed are very committed to the young people. This has led to them doing extra duties to cover shifts. As mentioned previously a lack of staff has meant that keyworking sessions have not happened as often as the school wants and the independence programme has on occasions had to be placed on hold. Newly appointed care and teaching staff follow an induction programme which includes familiarity with the guidance in the staff handbook. Thirty hours a year are available for in-service education and training. All staff are expected to attend an introductory first aid course and there is a rolling programme of more substantial first aid training to enable a qualified first aider to be available on each shift. Child protection and restraint are on a rolling training programme. At the point of inspection the school had nine members of staff who had completed NVQ 3 and five members of staff currently on the course. New members of staff have only just enrolled. Thus at the time of inspection the school did not have 80% of its residential staff NVQ 3 qualified. The school holds a two day course for all staff that is residential which looks at future developments of the school. Residential staff are not receiving supervision or appraisals at the required intervals. A new appraisal system has very recently been implemented. Support staff now receive supervision and appraisals from the newly appointed business manager. There are lines of accountability with the school, from the head teacher and senior management team. The school has crisis management plans in place. Information on relevant procedures is shared with parents. Notton House School is responsible for the management of a devolved budget from Bristol City Council. This is fully audited at four yearly intervals. The school is able to carry any savings forward into the following financial year. The Governors sanction spending on projects. As stated previously in this report systems are in place to monitor records kept by the school as required but there was no evidence regarding any actions taken in light of this monitoring. Also as stated previously there were some records that had been monitored where gaps had been identified at this inspection but had not been raised during the school's monitoring process. An appointed Governor carries out monitoring visits on a termly basis. The majority of these visits are unannounced and a report is produced. The school also receives termly visits from the Sector Advisor. The Educational Welfare Officers visit on a regular basis. The school finances are monitored on a four yearly cycle. Bristol Property Services Department also monitor the maintenance of the school.

## 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 appropriate drugs storage is obtained.
- ensure prescribed medication is not changed unless written instructions are received from the prescribing GP or consultant.
- ensure the remaining recommendation from the environmental health inspection of 07/11/2007 is actioned.
- ensure the system for opening the window in the kitchen and the washing up area is improved.
- ensure the school monitoring system records action to be taken.
- ensure the restraint logs are fully completed in detail and the use of the time out room is recorded in detail.
- ensure verbal contact is made with referees and this is recorded. Also interview notes need to be consistently detailed.
- ensure minutes of the residential staffs daily meeting is produced and made available to the education staff.
- ensure keywork sessions happen as required by the school.
- ensure the independence training programme happens as required by the school.
- ensure all recording the young people's individual 'blue books' is correct and that there are no gaps in this record.
- ensure there are appropriate levels of staffing so that the school can carry out all appropriate work.
- ensure all residential staff receive supervision and appraisals at the required intervals.

## 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.**