

# Skilts School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Christy Wannop
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<b>Head of care</b>	Charles Herriotts
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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

Skilts is a Residential Special School for primary age boys with emotional, social and behaviour difficulties and associated learning difficulties, operated by Birmingham Local Authority Children's Services. It is situated in the countryside just outside Redditch in Warwickshire; approximately five miles from the Birmingham boundary. The school is in a main, older building and there are two modern residential houses, each with two wings. They are Seal and Otter, Owl and Woodpecker. It is open on weekdays and term time only. Residential pupils stay for anything up to four nights a week, depending on their needs. Children are usually placed at the school by Birmingham and have usually experienced major difficulties in mainstream schools or other settings; are likely to have experienced exclusion on either a temporary or permanent basis and therefore have had time out of regular school. Of the current 56 children at Skilts, 27 use the overnight residential service at some time during each week, though only three were in residence on the first night of the inspection. Each child is assigned to one of four residential houses. All children report there first thing in the morning, can have breakfast if they want and start the school day from there, eat lunch there and go home from there in taxis to their own homes.

### Summary

This school had an inspection in June 2007, but Ofsted did not produce a report. This second key inspection was announced. Key standards were inspected at this visit, as well as recommendations made at the last reported inspection in June 2006 in the areas of medication, maintenance, care planning and staff development. The school has taken action to improve. The inspector looked at outcomes for children in the areas of being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, and organisation. Achieving economic well being was not inspected. Skilts achieved outstanding outcomes for children in three of these areas and good outcomes in the remaining two. Two recommendations have been made about ensuring consistently safe recruitment practice and improving medication policy and procedure. Children enjoy being at school and benefit from clear, professional, effective and imaginative management and a staff team who enjoy their work and are skilled, knowledgeable and enthusiastic.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

### Improvements since the last inspection

The medication policy has been updated to include guidance about safe management of medication between home and school. Care planning systems for children have been improved and are under review. Action has been taken to ensure that the school site is safe for children and that risk assessments are regularly updated. Staff are enrolled on National vocational Qualification (NVQ) 3 in working with Children and Young People.

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted. Skilts is a healthy school and children are encouraged and supported to lead healthy lives. The general health of children is promoted through whole school initiatives

and direct input around mental, physical and emotional health. Food is good, freshly prepared and enthusiastically appreciated by children. Staff know about children's health needs and have the skills to manage administration of medication and first aid. Current medication policy and procedure administration does not take account that some medications such as Ritalin-type drugs are considered controlled drugs and do not have the additionally stringent storage and recording and monitoring procedures in place. Systems for receipt, administration and audit of medication are otherwise robust and clear. There is well-coordinated support from the primary health trust school nursing service, who maintain NHS health records on site. Additionally, children have good health plans drawn up by residential staff in consultation with parents.

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

The provision is good.

Children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled. Adults and children follow guidelines for privacy that keep everyone safe. Children at Skilts are protected from harm and are helped to develop skills to keep themselves safe. Children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration. Arrangements for complaints and protecting children who may be at risk from running off or away are well established. The welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse. Senior staff have made great improvements in systems for documenting child protection. They make sure that the staff actively consider safeguarding issues in everyday work with children. Staff consider this an explicit responsibility. The school has complied without fail to notify all appropriate authorities of the Significant events set out in standard 7 and routinely makes personal contact with parents and other people who are significant to the child or young person to let them know about the event. Children report bullying. The school increases and arranges supervision of children to reduce the opportunities for bullying. The Head of Care is undertaking a review of arrangements to support anti bullying practice that includes consultation with parents, children and staff. This is imaginative work to improve the school's approach and understanding of how bullying affects children at the school. Children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of positive behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour. The school approach to behaviour is insightful and skilled and based on de-escalation. Children live in schools that provide physical safety and security. The environment is safe for children, and health and safety systems, to ensure that it continues to be so, are well established now. There is a clear, well-informed risk assessment and management of risk from fire. There is a procedure for selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers, and the monitoring of visitors to the school, to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers. In practice, the school is not able to evidence that recruitment procedures are of the same consistently high standard. Staff recruitment is generally good and files well kept. Of five staff files examined, four were fully satisfactory. However, one did not show that two written references had been obtained, though did show that verbal references had been taken up.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school. Children are helped and encouraged by all adults at the school; residential staff, teachers, teaching assistants, and domestic staff, to achieve and to progress in education. The school

takes a holistic view of the child and their need to learn and to make use of their learning in their everyday lives. Staff have imagination about learning and commitment to giving children the wider skills they will need to lead fulfilled lives. Reading with children has become increasingly important in the residential day. One child, in a school survey wrote: 'Since I've been here I learn my times tables and it is great.' Children receive individual support when they need it. Children have their needs identified and staff make strenuous efforts to get them the help they need either within the school or from external professionals or organisations. Staff support and prompt parents to do the best for their children. The referral group is critically important in marshalling people to ensure time and resources are secured for children. This group, comprising staff from the school and professionals from health, education and welfare services, meets regularly to draw together concerns about children, to assess and make active plans to address their needs. The group then reviews progress and can make referrals on for specialist interventions. This is excellent focussed welfare practice. In a school survey, five children wrote expressly, that they are happy at the school and one, that 'Skilts is the best school ever.'

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

The provision is good.

Children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run. All children are encouraged to communicate their views. Systems have increasingly focussed on arranging the school in way that delivers the best for the children; from the reorganisation of the curriculum and the way that subjects are taught in school, to the house meetings, school council and consultations that take place. Staff make time to communicate well with children and encourage them to have a positive voice. Children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school. Care planning is good, in a child-friendly format and review and feedback to parents is also good. The school has a written agreement with parents outlining the reason for and desired outcomes from the residential placement. The Head Of Care is continually reviewing and monitoring the effectiveness of the planning system to ensure that outcomes are evident and work with children is targeted meaningfully. Children stay at the school for up to four nights a week and staff encourage them to have good contact with parents by phone. Staff actively support parents and involve them in decisions and plans for children.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is not judged.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

Children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for life in residence. There is excellent management of the school and of the place of residence within it. Senior management teams clearly work well together and share a positive practical vision for the children at Skilts. Quotes from children in a school survey were: 'Skilts school - best school' and ' Skilts is good.' Children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently. Staff are experienced, skilled and confident. Staffing levels are good and the Senior Management Team has deployed staff effectively to ensure that children have the adults they need to care for them and the adults have the time to fulfil the requirements of their increasingly professional role. Staff are

well qualified and NVQ systems are well established. Relationships between children and staff are good. Children appreciate the care that staff give. Children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare. Staff have great confidence in the people who manage them and managers value the staff. Professional supervision is well established and effective. Appraisal is not yet extended to domestic staff. Children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools. Systems for monitoring the operation of the residential school are excellent, and the school has an atmosphere of purposeful and imaginative direction.

## 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 at least two written references for all members of staff. (NMS 27)
- improve the medication policy and procedure to ensure that specific medications are stored in accordance with good practice guidance from a qualified health professional. (NMS 14)

## 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.**