

# Bridge School, Longmoor Campus

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 Bridge school, Longmoor site, provides education at nursery and primary levels to children of both sexes with severe or profound learning disabilities. The school is purpose built and includes teaching areas, indoor and outdoor recreational facilities and an integrated self-contained residential provision. The residential provision is available for up to six children on a term time basis. The school is based within a residential area of Sutton Coldfield on the North side of Birmingham. The school has some local amenities but children and staff are also able to access a wide range of leisure and cultural facilities offered throughout the city.

### **Summary**

This was an announced inspection completed over a three day period. Children are effectively supported by health plans and the school nurse ensures that medication and health commitments are completed appropriately. Some good systems are in place to ensure that young people are supported with being safe within the residential provision. Unfortunately the systems in place for recording of additional measures of control and the understanding of what is required by the standard is not adequate. Recruitment records are insufficient and do not cover all staff that work within the school and it's residential provision. Good links are in place between the residential and school provisions with planning in place to meet the needs of the young people. The young people now have an advocate who visits regularly. The residential provision was not examined as part of this inspection due to previous inspections showing that this is a good resource. The organisation of the unit has developed and there is sufficient staffing, this has developed from the latter part of 2007 when the unit had to be closed for a short period due to insufficient staff being available. Staff show a good awareness of the needs of the children and attempt to meet these throughout the children's residential experience.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

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

Outcomes with regard to serious safeguarding concerns are appropriately recorded within the school's systems. The children now have an independent advocate that visits the children and staff on a regular basis and offers a degree of support to the children. Training records have improved and there is now a complete record of the training that has been provided by the school over the past year. Appraisals have been completed on all staff to highlight their positive working practices and to identify areas requiring additional training.

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

The provision is good.

Children all have health planning within their individual files, this is within pen pictures, and placement plans. These plans highlight where there are issues for the children and how these are to be responded to, such as allergies to different foods. Some health information, such as optical and hearing testing, is organised by the school nurse and information with relation to these is stored by her, although feedback is given to the residential staff to action if required. Planning is in place for a range of areas that ensures a healthy lifestyle is promoted for the children, including plans for eating, washing, and bedtimes. Referrals have been made to specialist health services to ensure that children and their families are supported by the school.

Information within the unit promotes healthy living. Medication administration is recorded appropriately including the use of a controlled drugs register and medication is stored in line with pharmaceutical guidance. Permissions are sought for medication to be administered from parents or social workers. The majority of residential staff are trained in first aid, and the first aid cabinet is updated on a regular basis. Accident forms are available for completion and these are then assessed and stored by the assistant head teacher. Parents are contacted if there is an accident within the unit.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's privacy is respected within the unit and children have their own bedrooms, although some staff were observed walking into these without knocking when children were in there. There are sufficient policies in place within the school to meet the expectations of the standard. There is a children's telephone available within a semi-private area and this is reported to be used by the children. The school has an appropriate complaints policy that has been examined at a previous inspection. Each young person has information regarding what they can do if they are unhappy within the unit and school. The school has a complaints file that records issues that parents have raised and the outcomes of these. No formal complaints have been received by the school since the last inspection. The school has an appropriate child protection policy that is in line with the local authority safeguarding procedures. Staff are trained in child protection issues and state that they are comfortable with reporting issues to senior staff if so required. A slight injuries form that was in use at the last inspection has been updated to reflect that these injuries may form part of child protection concern, and these are monitored by the deputy head. No child protection issues have arisen since the last inspection of the unit. The school has an appropriate policy with regard to anti bullying. The residential unit also has a children's handbook which is able to be used if children are unhappy, in line with the complaints paperwork. Staff report that there are no specific issues with relation to children and bullying. The unit's staffing is sufficient to be able to respond to incidents of bullying behaviour. The school policy with relation to children absenting themselves without permission is appropriate. A high staff ratio, with constant supervision of children, and the layout and security of the site provide effective measures to prevent unauthorised absences. Records with relation to additional measures of control are insufficient and do not fully show appropriate recordings of when sanctions and restraints have been used within the unit. However examination of the sanction records reveals that all those recorded form part of individual behaviour planning and appropriate responses to children's behaviour such as the use of distraction techniques and teaching appropriate sharing between peers. As such no actual sanctions as defined by the standard are being used within the unit due to the learning needs of the children. A similar situation is true of restraints that have been recorded, young people have been physically moved in some instances or held in a way that is conducive to good childcare due to the children's level of understanding and disability rather than as a restraint. Other clear restraint recordings are not sufficiently recorded in line with the expectations of the standard. The deputy head monitors part of the restraint record although this is insufficient. All health and safety checks examined are up to date and have been completed on a regular basis. All fire checks and drills are appropriate. Appropriate checks have been completed on gas and electrical appliances and the school has had its whole school electrical survey completed since the last inspection. All cleaning chemicals are stored within locked areas away from children. Recruitment records are variable, with some simply needing verification of references. Recruitment records of staff who are currently employed within the school in a different role but now complete additional duties

within the residential unit are insufficient. No copies of the disqualification disclosures form in line with the Disqualification from Caring for Children (England) Regulations 2002 is completed for any staff. All staff have up to date Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks although the original disclosure information is still stored within staff files. No specific system is in place to ensure that checks are updated in a timely fashion.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Teaching and care staff work well to support the educational needs of the children within the unit. Both sets of staff are involved with the development of individual education plans, and targets are also set for children in line with the five children's outcomes including educational and social areas. Information is passed between school, the residential provision and home through the use of daily diaries which show activities that the children have been involved in and pertinent issues, this is in addition to handovers that are given verbally to teaching staff. Children have access to a range of educational books and toys that are appropriate to meet their needs. Children enjoy a good range of activities both within the residential unit and externally, including eating out, a climbing wall and boating. The residential unit has access to some of the areas of the school in the evening to allow a greater range of activities. Children celebrate important days including birthdays and festivals and there is also a weekly family group that parents are invited to. Individualised support is offered to the children through the care staff team who have a good awareness of the differing needs of the young people. Children are supported through the development of communication programmes developed by the local Primary Care Trust. The school has good links with a speech and language therapist and music therapist who visit the school on a regular basis. Additional support for children and families is accessed through an organisation called the Malachi Trust. The residential unit is visited on a regular basis by two children's advocates who have a good background with children with disabilities. Information is available next to the children's telephone stating how to contact them if required. Insufficient vetting checks have been completed on the advocates, with only CRB checks having been completed.

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

The provision is good.

Staff support young people in ensuring that their views are listened to and responded to. Staff ensure that children's reactions to areas such as menus and activities are responded to through discussions with school staff such as the cook. The unit staff ensure that additional support is received regarding communication techniques from organisations such as the primary care trust with the development of communication programmes. The children use picture exchange systems to help develop decision making and staff promote the children's use of this system. Staff's training in the use of this system needs to be updated however to ensure that all staff feel confident in communicating at the most effective level, this is planned for within the school's training scheme. The unit's staff communicate on a regular basis with children's parents and attempt to get parents involved with decision making regarding their child's development in the unit and how these programmes can be used outside the school and residential unit environment. Each young person has a care plan that includes areas that are stated within the standard, additional plans are also available within the children's files with relation to specific areas of development. Children also have pen pictures that include similar information to that within the care plan. Staff have a very high awareness of the children's abilities, likes and

dislikes but this is not always obvious from the plans that are recorded. Each child has a key worker who supports them during their placement and is responsible for placement planning and also acts as an advocate within meetings. The staff support children's contact with parents and relevant adults through regular updates via telephone and letters. Due to the short periods that children are away from parents and carers insufficient contact is not an issue for the young people. Children have access to the unit's telephone.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is not judged.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The school has an appropriate Statement of Purpose that is linked to the new school prospectus. Jointly these two documents cover all of the required areas of the standard and show that the residential provision is part of the whole school development plan. The staffing position within the unit is at a good level and there are sufficient staff to meet the needs of the young people within the unit. This has not been the case since the last inspection and the lack of permanent or full time staff has led to the unit having to be closed for a period. This situation has now been rectified, with sufficient casual staff also being in place to cover any required hours due to absence. The school does not have a specific staffing policy that states the number of care staff required at differing points of the day and senior support if necessary. The staff meet on a regular basis and minutes of these meetings are available showing that a range of areas are discussed including children and working practices. Staff receive training in a range of differing areas. There is a school training plan that includes updates for areas such as first aid, child protection and additional measures of control. Each staff member has a plan regarding their training needs, although some staff requests for training are not able to be fully realised due to funding and cover requirements. Full training in all areas is not completed by casual staff. One staff member has completed their NVQ Level 3 thus ensuring that 75% of the full time staff team are sufficiently trained. Staff receive supervision from senior staff although records show that this has been completed on an insufficient basis both in terms of length of time that meetings have occurred and regularity. Over the past two months staff have completed their personal development plans with the deputy head, to examine their own development within the unit. Staff did however report that informal and team supervision is received on a very regular basis and that any issues arising could be raised with the management team. The senior staff team are involved with monitoring the systems as stated within the standard and records are signed for on a regular basis. The school's head teacher is aware of the role of the residential unit and supports developments that are ongoing regarding young people. A member of the governing body visits the residential unit to complete monitoring visits, although these are not completed on a half-termly basis. Reports are written following these visits. There is a concern that the governor is also a parent of one of the children within the residential unit and there is a possibility of a conflict of interests within this monitoring role, due to a lack of definition between what is a parental visit and what is a governors visit.

## 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 all incidents of restraint within the residential provision are recorded within a dedicated system that complies with the expectations of NMS 10.14
- ensure recruitment information is available on all staff who work with children in the school, including advocates, covering all areas specified within NMS 27.1
- develop a staffing policy that can be recorded within the Statement of Purpose that is in line with NMS 28.2
- ensure staff are supported through regular supervision on a half termly basis. NMS 30.2
- ensure a governor visits the school on a half termly basis and that these are sufficiently reported. NMS 33.2.



## 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.**