

Ratcliffe School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Pam Fletcher
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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

Radcliffe School is a Local Authority provision for young people aged between eight to 16 years of mixed gender, who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. At the present time the school provides education and boarding provision for 31 young people, with a further 10 young people boarding on a part-time basis. In addition, the school provides education for 21 day students and off site education for four young people.

The school and five residential boarding houses are all on the same campus. Another boarding house has been upgraded since the last inspection (currently not used for sleeping accommodation). The majority of young people have a single bedroom. All boarding areas have kitchenettes, dining and sitting areas.

The school has grounds of approximately 10 acres. Young people have the use of hard and soft play areas.

Summary

This was an announced key inspection, carried out by two inspectors. The purpose has been to look at all National Minimum Standards (NMS). The focus has also been to look at progress in meeting the six recommendations made following the last inspection. Overall, good progress has been made in meeting recommendations.

Young people attending the school are happy and well supported by staff. They are encouraged to maximise their potential both academically and socially. Staff work in a cohesive manner and provide consistent care. The atmosphere amongst young people is cheerful, and behaviour management is good.

Communication amongst all staff is good. Staff spoken to report a high level of both team and management support. Staff meetings are held regularly. Levels of formal one to one supervision do not meet National Minimum Standards.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection recommendations were made in relation to strengthening the reporting of child protection concerns and making notifications. Systems for reporting child protection concerns have strengthened and notifications are now made. It was noted however, that the follow up to one child protection concern did not follow local safeguarding protocols. The incident was reported. Staff are clear about their role in reporting concerns internally, but are less confident about reporting directly to lead agencies should this be necessary. One recommendation made after the last inspection will be taken forward.

A recommendation following the last inspection was that the policy guidance on the administration of medicines be implemented in practice. The procedures and systems for the administration and recording of medicines have since been reviewed. A designated person is now taking lead responsibility in this area and guidance given by a pharmacist inspector has

been followed. There is now a clear audit trail of medicines, both administered and held in stock.

A recommendation was made that young people can make and receive telephone calls in private and without staff permission. Arrangements are underway for pay telephones to be installed in each residential area. In the future young people will be able to make telephone calls without asking staff for permission.

A recommendation made after the last inspection was that toilet door locks can be opened from the outside in the event of emergency. Locks on toilet and shower doors have been replaced by ones that can give access should this be necessary.

A recommendation was made that all staff receive fire safety training. All staff have now received fire safety training.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from living at a school where their health and wellbeing is actively promoted. New measures have been put into place to strengthen and promote safety in the administration of medication. Practice has been reviewed and a designated person has been appointed to take responsibility for overseeing health care needs. The two members of staff working in this area are keen to further develop and promote health education. They work effectively with families and other professionals and demonstrate a clear commitment to enhancing their own knowledge in order to benefit young people. Care staff demonstrate a good awareness of the need to manage physical care needs in a respectful manner. They understand the importance of not stigmatizing young people who need additional support.

Young people are provided with plentiful, wholesome food. The school has won awards for healthy eating. Meals both in the main dining room and in the individual residential areas are well managed, orderly occasions. Feedback from young people is that they appreciate the food provided and understand the benefits of eating healthily. The cook works in conjunction with care staff where young people have additional dietary needs. The kitchen is spotless and well organised.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from living in a school where measures are taken to offer them safety and protection, however, it was noted that the manner of reporting one particular child protection concern was not sufficiently robust.

Staff relationships with young people are good. Staff combine a high level of monitoring with a good understanding of young people's right to privacy and respect. Arrangements have been made for young people to have easy access to a telephone. The principal reported that agreement has been reached and that pay telephones will be installed in each residential area in the near future. Young people who need support with intimate care needs have clear intimate care plans. Staff are aware of the need to offer support in a manner which respects the privacy of the young people concerned.

Young people spoken to all report being able to talk to someone at the school if they are unhappy or have an issue. A complaints log is held. Complaints records show that six complaints have been made since the last inspection. Some records lack detail and do not indicate if the complainant was satisfied with the outcome.

All staff, including ancillary staff receive child protection training. Staff understand their reporting responsibilities within the school, but are less clear about their responsibility to report directly to lead agencies should this be necessary. The systems for reporting concerns and making notifications has generally strengthened. One child protection concern had not been reported in line with lead agency guidelines. Directives from Local Authority training had possibly been misinterpreted.

Staff take steps to minimise bullying. These include increasing awareness amongst staff and young people and having an anti bullying committee. Staff are diligent in monitoring young people's whereabouts and demonstrate a timely response to addressing any undue teasing or bullying. Young people spoken to feel that staff listen to them and address concerns of bullying appropriately.

The school holds policies and reporting procedures in the event that young people are absent without authority. Records demonstrate that the majority of incidents involving unauthorised absence are low level and involve young people running of into nearby woods. Incidents are clearly recorded.

Young people's behaviour is well managed. The school uses a 'traffic light' system which is clearly understood by young people and staff. Staff praise and reward good behaviours. This can include letters to families from the principal to inform them when things have gone particularly well. Staff receive training in physical intervention. This is used as a last resort when behaviours become unsafe. Sanctions include time alone and not taking part in trips and activities. Young people appear happy and purposeful. Those spoken to report that staff are fair. Young people with complex additional needs have sanctions tailored to meet their individual needs. The care of this particularly vulnerable group of young people is planned with sensitivity and awareness.

Risk management is good. A designated person takes lead responsibility for health and safety in the residential areas and grounds. Records stating monthly checks (in residential areas) had not been filled in on a monthly basis. All staff have received recent fire safety training. Fire drills are held and checks are made to fire prevention devices. One recent fire drill involved an evacuation during the early morning, before young people had been woken for school.

Recruitment procedures have strengthened. Records demonstrate that checks have been made under NMS 27. These include obtaining Criminal Records Bureau clearance prior to employment, retaining interview notes and obtaining references.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from living in a school where they are given a high level of support. They are encouraged and supported in order to maximise both educational attainment and social experiences.

Care staff support young people in preparing for their school day. Breakfast is encouraged and young people are helped to get ready for school. Handovers take place at the end of each school day. These handovers include young people, teachers and care staff. Communication between education and care staff is good.

Young people benefit from a good range of purposeful activities. Activities take place both on site and away from the school. Lunchtimes also include activities. Activities include football, beach trips, swimming, camping, visits to London and an annual trip to France. Where young people achieve success, including good behaviour they are rewarded with special trips, such as an outing to a theme park. Young people appear happy, purposeful and well occupied. A good range of games, books and videos are held in each residential area. Individual young people are encouraged to take up hobbies in the community, for example cadets, judo and ballet classes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from living at a school where they are supported in putting their views forward. They are encouraged to have their say at house meetings and school council meetings. Several changes were reported to have been made in response to the views of young people.

The relationships between staff and young people are very good. Boundaries are put into place effectively, at the same time staff demonstrate sensitivity and kindness. Staff communicate well with each other and young people understand what is expected of them. Staff act as good role models and relationships are mutually respectful.

Admissions to the school are all planned, with young people making pre admission visits. These visits and the phased manner in which young people are introduced to the school very much depend on each young person's individual needs. Staff work closely with parents and young people report that they are helped to settle into the school. Older students due to leave the school are reintegrated into their own communities. This is undertaken in a phased manner. This includes residing for shorter periods at school. A designated residential area is used for older students. They are encouraged and supported in learning self help skills such as cooking and clearing up after meals. Young people are linked into the services of a 'Connexions' worker who spends regular time at the school.

Young people each have a written placement plan and in addition records are held electronically. A shortened version of plans, coded to protect confidentiality is held in the staff room. Reviews are held regularly.

Young people are supported in contacting their families and significant others. Families report appreciating the level of contact that they have with the school. Where there are health or other issues contact is ongoing, sometimes on a daily basis. The school is currently re-appointing a home/school coordinator.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from living at a school that promotes increased economic wellbeing.

Young people wear a uniform during school hours, and can wear clothes of their own choice in the evening. They are fashionably and appropriately dressed.

The school is located on the outskirts of the town, with easy access to local leisure facilities. All residential areas are located on one campus. There is CCTV monitoring of main corridors and external areas. This has been extended externally thereby increasing security in the grounds. The grounds provide space, football area and play equipment. The majority of young people sleep in single rooms. Where rooms are shared measures are taken to ensure that young people have their own designated space. Young people are encouraged to personalise rooms if they want to.

The residential buildings are maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair. The premises are very clean and the gardens well maintained. There are sufficient showers and toilet facilities. Locks have been replaced since the last inspection. Locks can now be opened from the outside should there be an emergency. Communal living areas are 'homely' with photographs, pictures and plants in place.

One boarding area is designated for older students to prepare them for independence. This is well equipped and furnished to a high standard.

The school has a continued programme of refurbishment and update in place. The needs of individual young people are fully considered during this planned programme. One of the residential areas has recently been refurbished to a very high standard. The lower floor is being used as an educational area. The upper floor has been designed as a sleeping area specifically for those young people who have complex needs. Planning has been thoughtful and has included input from the complex needs coordinator who leads in this area. A sensory room is currently being developed.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Young people benefit from living at a school where all staff including the principal, senior managers and governors, demonstrate a commitment to continued progress and improvement.

Young people each have an individual record of their history and progress. Some records are kept on file, other are maintained electronically. The principal reports that when young people leave the school their records are archived.

The school maintains the required records for staff and young people residing at the school. These include menus, accident logs and staff personnel files. Visitors are requested to sign in and out of the school and are given a visitor's badge.

Staffing levels are adequate in meeting the needs of young people. Staff report having to move residential areas where long term sickness has left shortfalls in staffing numbers. There are clear arrangements in place for evening and night staffing. These include senior staff sleeping in on a rotational basis. Care staff undertake 'sleep in' duties in each residential unit. There is one member of staff on waking nights. Young people know all the staff and continuity is provided. Staff are committed and energetic and work hard to ensure that individual needs as well as group needs are met.

Care staff receive ongoing training on a 'rolling' programme basis. They report being able to identify personal training needs and being able to access specific training to help them with any specialist roles undertaken. Variable progress has been made with the NVQ process. Some staff have achieved level three, some are undertaking level four and some are registered to start the NVQ process.

Staff all report feeling well supported by senior managers and by team colleagues. Communication is good and regular meetings are held. Levels of formal supervision do not meet the required standard. It was reported that this has been due to long term staff sickness. Care staff spoken to had not had annual appraisals. All staff spoken to were clear about their roles and areas of accountability.

The governing body is actively involved in the management of the school. Records demonstrate monitoring by the school's principal, senior managers and by governors. Written reports are available.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

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

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

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

- ensure that the record of any complaints made includes the action taken and the outcome. (NMS 4.3)
- ensure that local safeguarding procedural guidance is followed when reporting any child protection concern. Review the effectiveness of staff training in child protection. (NMS 5) (Appendix 1.2.)
- ensure that all staff receive regular supervision and appraisals. (NMS 30)