

Charlton School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Margaret Lynes
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About this inspection

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

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

The inspection judgements and what they mean

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

Service information

Brief description of the service

The school is situated in Charlton in London, close to all main services. The boarding unit is sited within the main school, offering a small, comfortable home for eight pupils, with additional garden and play areas. In the evening the children have the use of some of the school facilities, such as the swimming pool, library and IT suite, as well as going out into the community to visit the cinema, youth clubs and other local activities.

Summary

This was an announced full inspection during which compliance with all of the key standards, where applicable, was assessed. The previous inspection had resulted in four recommendations being made. The action the school has taken to meet these is outlined below. This inspection has resulted in a further 11 recommendations being made. These relate to medication administration; liaison between parents, school and care staff; policies and procedures; child protection training; the recording of sanctions; risk assessments; renewal of CRBs; evidencing how goals and targets are being met; replacing the carpets in the communal areas; increasing the number of staff with an NVQ qualification and expanding and improving the quality assurance systems.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Four recommendations were made following the last full inspection. These related to the need for the school to consider providing privacy screens in the shared bedrooms; to provide a sick room to meet the changing health needs of the children and to provide a short term sleeping facility for daytime use; to ensure staff read the residential unit's policies and procedures and sign to say they have done so; and to revise the Statement of Purpose so that it is a true reflection of the changing population in the school. While a specific sick room has not been provided within the residential unit itself, there is now a designated medical room within the school. If for any reason one of the boarders needed to return to the unit during the day, then there will always be staff available to care for them. Privacy screens have been obtained and are available should any child indicate they wish for them to be used. To date this has not occurred. A sheet at the front of the staff handbook evidenced that staff have signed to say that they have read the contents. The Board of Governors has recently approved a revised copy of the Statement of Purpose. It is more reflective of the current service the school provides and is more user friendly.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The residential unit cares for children with complex needs. There is good liaison with and access to relevant health professionals. Each child has an annual medical and dental check-up. Physiotherapists are available on site, and there is easy access to occupational therapists and other specialists. The unit is very well equipped for children with disabilities. Four children's files were inspected. They all contained detailed information relating to the specific needs of each child. Staff have access to guidance relating to the giving of intimate care and the prevention of (illegal) drug use, but there are no other policies and procedures for staff regarding

the promotion of the children's health. Care staff do liaise with their educational colleagues but nevertheless this process is not as robust as it could be and does not provide for close working relationships with the children's parents. The Head of the school stated that this is an area in which he and his senior management team have recognised that their practice could be improved. The medication administration records for all of the children in the boarding unit were examined. This evidenced that there were a number of omissions on several charts. One child had emergency procedures in place but the actual medication that would have to be administered in such circumstances had not been recorded on the drug chart. There was considerable confusion regarding one drug chart, with conflicting information about the dosage of one drug to be given. This was raised with the Head who took immediate steps to get the correct dosage clarified. He has also instigated a review and report of the nursing practice in the unit. The unit operates a four-weekly rotating menu, which is periodically changed after consultation with the children. The Head conceded that there is little liaison between school and the residential unit regarding diet and nutrition. It is conceivable therefore that similar meals may be served twice on the same day. The Head stated that the school is planning to liaise with a dietician, and conduct a review of both the school meals and the boarding unit meals.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The previous inspection report contained a recommendation that privacy screens be provided in the shared bedrooms. All of the children's bedrooms are shared, but all have a large, specially adapted en-suite bathroom. The unit has purchased a number of privacy screens however, although to date no child has expressed a desire for them to be used. Most of the unit's records are kept in the manager's office with the exception of the children's care plans and associated information. These are kept in a drawer beside each bed, which does not provide sufficient security. After discussion the head of care agreed that files would now be stored in her office. The head of care maintains a complaints log. There have not been any recent entries. There is a complaints policy in place and the right to complain is included in the unit guide. The unit does have a child protection policy in place but it is considerably out of date. Staff receive child protection training each year, although to date the unit chef has not been included in this training. This year's training date has already been arranged. The school Head stated that the training will include reference to the Local Safeguarding Children Board, and that the policy will also be updated. All staff receive team teach training. The school has designated child protection officer. The Head expressed concerns that the local authority was reluctant to take up child protection referrals unless there was actual evidence of abuse. Nevertheless the school continues to follow correct procedure and make referrals as it feels necessary, some more than once. There is an anti-bullying policy in place. The prevention of bullying is included in the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) programme and the school holds an anti-bullying week every year. A recent (whole school) survey indicated that a high percentage of the children felt that they were being bullied. The Head stated they were greatly surprised at this result but they are taking steps to further investigate it and to deal with any issues that arise. There is an appropriate policy in place with regard to children absconding. The head of care explained that they had never had a problem with children absconding, indeed the reverse happens, and some children will fight to get in! The school does not make heavy use of sanctions. Only one of the four children's files inspected contained reports of sanctions imposed. The head of care keeps copies of reports in a ring binder, rather than in a fixed leaf book as stated in the National Minimum Standards. There was no evidence that the sanction records were being regularly

reviewed by a member of the senior management team. The Head conceded that this monitoring process had not been as robust as it should have but within the last month new systems have been put in place. Each child has a behaviour management plan in place and where necessary a positive handling plan. Physical intervention has not been necessary for any boarder. The unit is designed for children with disabilities. Hot water thermostatic valves are in place, and staff carry out a weekly check of the temperature. The local authority which runs the school has a maintenance contract in place for the maintenance of the fire fighting equipment. Fire drills are performed regularly, and fire alarm tests are up to date. There is a fire risk assessment in place, along with general health and safety risk assessments. Each child has a comprehensive risk assessment in place. There has not been any risk assessment, however, with regard to areas of the residential unit where bullying may take place. The school has its own manual handling trainer, and there are moving and handling guidelines in place, where appropriate, for every child. Six staff files were examined. Five of these showed that the staff concerned had not had a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check since 2003. The school confirmed that it had sought renewal disclosures in or around 2004. The local authority had declined to process them, and the school has not submitted further applications. It was noted that one of nurses PINs had run out and there was no update on file. An update was provided at the end of the inspection. With the exception of the cook, staff are receiving supervision bi-annually, and also undergoing an annual appraisal. The cook did not appear to have undergone any supervision sessions since commencing work in the unit. The head of care has not had regular supervision either, however, responsibility for overseeing the residential unit has recently been passed to the Deputy Head, who stated that they will conduct supervision sessions with the head of care.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Due to ongoing building works, staff in the residential unit have to make a detour to reach the educational areas. This has, stated the head of care, led them to feel a little isolated and uninvolved. In order to obtain feedback from the teaching staff the residential unit has introduced a 'red file' system of recording for each class which has a boarder in it. Staff at the school are asked to comment on the boarders on a daily basis so that the unit is made aware of what has gone on for each of the boarders during the day. The level of use of this system varies from class to class. The exchange of information between the staff in the unit and their educational counterparts is not as productive as it could be. The school Head explained that they have a lot of new IT systems in place which give a wealth of information regarding the academic progress of each child. SMART targets based on needs identified through a behaviour rating scale and through classroom observation are set for each child. Each boarder has/will have a personalised learning plan. The head concurred that the school now needed to ensure that all of this data is translated into a working model that can be incorporated into actual care practice. The head of care confirmed that boarders might sometimes come back with homework which they can complete in their bedrooms or in one of the communal areas, with staff support if required. The children have a varied and active social life. On the evening of the first inspection day a group were gathered for their weekly Scouts meeting. They also enjoy swimming in the school's own pool. Other activities in which they can participate include attending vocational college courses; drama; film production; gardening; art therapy; music therapy; football; horse riding and visiting autistic friendly cinemas. The school is proactive in seeking support from corporate sponsors. From observation and also from discussion with the head of care, it was considered that staffing levels were high enough to provide individualised support to each of the boarders. Problems only arise when some day pupils stay behind for an evening activity

and go down to the residential unit. The school Head stated that he had noted this and confirmed he will ensure additional staff are in place for the future. Each boarder has a keyworker, and they have some input as to who this will be as far as is possible. The unit also makes use of an advocacy service.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

There are a number of ways in which staff seek the views of the children. If children do not have verbal skills then staff use other means to communicate such as through sign language. Good practice was noted on arrival and when being shown around the school, as the majority of staff greeted the inspector both verbally and by signing. The children are offered different media in which to make their views known including through drama and music therapy, the boarding unit council and the school council. The school employs its own social worker, who liaises with social service departments regarding the boarders. The children can freely access this member of staff. A number of Ofsted questionnaires were returned by boarders and parents. These were generally very positive. Each child has a file with comprehensive information in it. The 'care plan' is actually comprised of lots of separate pieces of documentation, but collectively the content is in keeping with that outlined in the National Minimum Standards. The new assessment systems being introduced in the school are aimed at providing boarding and school staff alike with detailed breakdowns of how each child's needs are being met. The success of this will be assessed at the next inspection. Staff in the boarding unit contribute to Looked After Children statutory reviews where they are made aware of them by the relevant local authority. The unit has minimal consultation with parents, and does not routinely share the plan of care with them. The files contained targets and goals for each child, however, there was little to show how these have been/are being met. Each child has an allocated keyworker and where possible the child is consulted before the allocation is made. The unit provides residential care during the week only, so there is rarely the issue of ensuring that the children maintain contact with their parents and families. Where there are contact restrictions, however, these are observed by the unit.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The residential unit is purpose built and very well equipped for children with disabilities. It is bright and spacious with ample communal areas. Each bedroom has a large en-suite bathroom, fitted with hoist tracks for ease of access from bedroom to bathroom. All of the bedrooms are shared, and personalised around each bed according to individual wishes. The children can access a play area adjacent to the unit, and there is a patio area outside where they can enjoy gardening. The unit was found to be well maintained and clean throughout. The only area which was substandard were the carpets in the communal areas, all of which were noticeably stained.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The last inspection report contained a recommendation that the Statement of Purpose be reviewed and updated so that it provides an accurate overview of the service provided by the school, and the type of young people it admitted. This has been done, and the revised statement approved by the board of governors. It contains details about the care staff and states who

the designated child protection officer is. The new Statement is more user friendly and contains photos of the unit. The school is very well staffed and this is continued in the boarding unit. The head of care stated that she was satisfied with level of staffing. There is a consistent staff team which provides good continuity of care. The staff team understands the children's needs and is able to meet them. There are always two staff on duty at night, one of whom is a qualified nurse. Residential staff only appeared to be overstretched when day pupils came to unit for after school activities. The head of care has an NVQ Level 4 qualification. She has four care staff in her team, 50% of whom have an NVQ Level 3 award. The unit therefore falls below the 80% recommended number of care staff with this award. Staff work an early morning shift, then come back for the afternoon/evening. The rota allows for staff to spend time with individual children. The head of care stated that she keeps an overview of the quality of care in the unit, but that there are no formal systems in place to record quality assurance monitoring. At the time of this inspection there was no direct overseeing of the unit by a member of the senior management team. The Head of the school has recognised this and is in the process of improving the quality assurance systems which will include providing supervision for the head of the unit by the school's deputy head. The Head states that quality monitoring is to be enhanced across the whole school, and plans for this to include closer liaison with the residential unit and an increase in the level of participation of the head of care in that quality assurance process. Regular visits are carried out by a member of the board of governors and a report is written. This is shared with the head of care. Both this individual and the chair of governors spoke highly of the school, the residential unit and the service and care provided by both.

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 there are robust systems in place to prevent further errors and confusion regarding medication administration (NMS 14).
- improve the interface between care staff, educational staff and children's parents, so as to provide consistency and cohesion in the care provided (NMS 14).
- provide staff with policies and procedures relating to the promotion of the health of children in the school (NMS 14).
- update the child protection policy and ensure that all staff in the residential unit undergo child protection training (NMS 5).
- maintain the sanction log in accordance with the National Minimum Standards, and ensure that all sanctions are regularly reviewed by a member of the senior management team (NMS 10).

- carry out risk assessments of the times, places and circumstances in which the risk of bullying is greatest, and take resultant action to reduce it (NMS 6).
- follow good practice guidelines and renew staff CRB disclosures every three years (NMS 27).
- better evidence how goals and targets set for individual children are being met (NMS 17).
- replace the carpets in the communal areas of the boarding unit (NMS 24).
- increase the number of care staff with a level 3 NVQ qualification (NMS 31).
- ensure that there are appropriate quality monitoring systems in place to ensure that the service provided is in keeping with the National Minimum Standards (NMS 32).

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.