

# Vale of Evesham School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC043049
<b>Inspection date</b>	5 December 2008
<b>Inspector</b>	Martha Nethaway
<b>Type of Inspection</b>	Key

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	12 October 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**

The Vale of Evesham School provides education for children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders and Learning Disabilities. The majority of children receive day education but there is provision for boarding, always described as the boarding school, which can accommodate 15 children and young people up to the age of 19 years, as weekly boarders. The boarding accommodation is placed on the first floor and consists of three suites, one of which is very separate from the other two. Each of the suites is staffed with its own team of care staff under a care officer, all of whom are responsible to the Head of Care. The school is maintained by the local education authority, Worcestershire County Council Department of Education and is directly responsible to a governing body.

### **Summary**

This inspection was an key announced visit. The outcome groups for Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Positive Contribution, Economic Wellbeing and Organisation were examined. The recommendations set at the last inspection were also followed up as part of this visit. Students were observed interacting with staff. Discussions were held with students, staff and management.

The boarding provision performs strongly in all aspects of care and education curriculum. Staff show commitment and the high level of dedication from the senior management team ensures that student experiences are overwhelmingly positive.

There are no recommendations set as a result of this inspection visit.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

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

The Vale of Evesham School continues to demonstrate commitment to ensuring the service meets the National Minimum Standards.

At the last inspection, the school was recommended to review the medication policy and this has now been achieved. The school has now made sure that Ofsted's contact details are included in the schools complaint's procedure. The Head of Care has completed their formal qualification. The quality assurance process has been embedded across the whole school provision to help ensure continuous improvement.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Student's health and welfare is very well supported by the school. Staff are effective in meeting student's health care needs. Parents and carers retain primary responsibility for meeting their child's overall health care needs. Staff obtain all relevant information from them in relation to their child's health care history. This ensures that staff are well informed. All students have a 'health care plan' that illustrates regular checks with the dentist, optician and other health services and this is co-ordinated to meet their needs. The school nurse provides training for staff about students with specific medical needs. For example, diabetes and the management

of epilepsy. Staff are highly competent and experienced and follow the guidance provided by the school nurse.

Staff are able to manage medication safely and follow the school's correct procedures for the administration, storage and disposal of medication. The Head of Care continues to monitor and review staff practices. Since the last inspection, the medication policy has been reviewed and updated.

Staff recognise they provide a valuable opportunity to promote healthy eating and physical activity for students. The dining area is of a high standard and conveys that staff care about students having a positive and sociable experience. Students are provided with healthy meals that match their energy needs. For example, fresh fruit, vegetable and starchy foods are regularly featured in the menus. Students are regularly involved in sporting activities. For example, by taking part in water based activities such as canoeing.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The school continues to place a strong emphasis on the promotion and protection of student's welfare. This is underpinned by robust procedures that are periodically reviewed. Senior staff have a clear ethos of working collaboratively with other professionals including social workers and the children's team. Staff are suitably trained and know what steps to take when they have a concern about a child's welfare. Senior staff who are designated child protection officers receive appropriate training to fulfil their child safeguarding responsibilities. There are no safeguarding concerns at the setting.

The school has in place an effective complaints procedure. A child-friendly version is also available for students. Senior staff commented, 'Staff have a positive working relationship with parents and carers in terms of meeting the best interests of the child'. Since the last inspection, Ofsted has received no complaints.

Staff are attentive and give the utmost priority to health and safety matters for the boarding provision. Staff consistently use risk management tools to analyse risks effectively. This is well integrated into the culture of the school. Fire safety checks are being completed and regular fire drills are taking place with the involvement of students. The school has in place a fire risk assessment.

Staff are able to monitor student whereabouts successfully. Staffing supervision levels are good. Electronic keypads are used for the main doors into the dormitories. There are no incidents of students going missing. Staff demonstrate a clear understanding of managing student's privacy and handling confidential information professionally.

Staff and student interactions are positive. Excellent steps are taken by staff to ensure that group living dynamics are positive experiences for all students. Bullying incidents are rare. Great care is taken to ensure that there is good compatibility with the boarders living together. This is achieved by students learning to relate well to each other, respecting staff and behaving well. Students are provided with many opportunities to increase their interpersonal skills which helps develop their confidence and self-esteem. For students with the most challenging behaviour an 'Individual Behavioural Management Plan' is agreed with parents, carers, students and staff. They are well informed about the strategies that are used to help encourage positive

behaviours. All staff receive training for physical intervention but this is seldom used to manage student behaviour.

Staff recruitment and selection processes are sound. Staff are deemed suitable to work with vulnerable children.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The educational achievement of students is very well promoted. The setting provides its own on-site educational facilities and the education policy sets out the principles of the provision. The provision provides a 24-hour school curriculum. Staff use 'Individual Education Plans' to identify student needs and this promotes effective planning and helps students to understand their progress. Targets are set annually and each term, students progress is monitored and reviewed. Parents and carers are informed and key workers contribute to written reports to the annual review.

Students and staff relationships are harmonious. Staff provide carefully planned support which provides significant help for students. They develop and create opportunities for students to develop their problem solving skills and develop good social skills. For example, students are regularly involved in shopping in the community, youth club and in a range of outdoor pursuits.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Student welfare and self-esteem is promoted with helpful strategies being adopted by staff. They are well praised for their effort and this achieved by providing activities that interest students. Staff foster a caring environment and lead by example.

Students experience positive planned admissions that are paced to meet the specific needs of the student. Staff obtain relevant information about the day-to-day routines prior to admission. Staff maintain clear and effective communication with the parent or carer during the introductory phase to boarding.

Student care plans are well implemented in practice. These plans are clear, well structured and well managed. The plans correspond with the current needs of students. Records show that these are periodically updated as needs change or progress. All students are allocated key workers and a class tutor meets and sets the termly targets and these are successfully assessed. Students have targets set related to their academic, social and personal development. The key worker role is essential with helping students with any problems and liaising with their families or carers. Students benefit greatly from this individual attention. Students are supported to retain contact with their parents or carers and this is achieved through regular phone calls and the effective use of the home or school diaries.

Staff use formal and informal routes to consult with students. The school has in place an effective student school council with representatives from the residential boarding. They are able to influence decisions about the school. Staff are good at enabling students to express views relating to choice of activities for evenings.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

All students have a transition plan before they leave school. Students are assisted to develop their independent living skills and personal skills. The school places good emphasis on work related learning and vocational courses.

There are three residential suites named, Dilwyn, Seymour and Cotswold. The residential accommodation is of a high quality and very well maintained. The aesthetic appearances of the boarding facilities promotes a warm homely environment. Students find the environment safe, secure and stimulating. Students are regularly involved in their local community and this helps students integrate with society and gives them new life experiences.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

The school is dynamic and very well managed. Students benefit from this positive leadership and the energetic commitment of staff. One parent commented 'The staff are excellent and appear to be well supported'. Parents and carers are provided with clear and accurate information about the school, facilities and support on offer. Staff understand the high expectations and have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Students are provided with information about the school that is successfully conveyed in a child-friendly format.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The school is good at meeting the diversity of need and adopts an inclusive practice. This is promoted through the curriculum. One senior member of staff commented, 'All members within our school will be informed and guided towards the principles of self-respect, developing morals that value and respect all races, religions and cultures'.

Staff demonstrate that they are effective and regularly meet as a staff group to review student's needs and prioritise how these will be met. Meetings are clearly structured and a formal record is made. They are very well supported by the senior management group. This is significantly enhanced by the direct availability of the Head of Care in terms of leadership, expert practice and is highly efficient at motivating staff and monitoring the boarding provision. As a result, staff are secure and confident with their care practices. Staff training is given a good priority. For example staff have attended training on, 'Understanding Emotional Health', 'Autism Spectrum', and 'Intensive Interaction'. The majority of staff are qualified to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People.

Staff are receiving planned supervision termly. Staff performance is being monitored and training plans are in place to demonstrate how their professional development is being progressed. Staff manage their time effectively and staff are well deployed. The rotas are well organised to meet the demands of the children and young people. Additional resources are in place for night waking staff and one teaching member of staff supports the morning and evening routines on specific days which are Tuesday and Thursday.

Overall, the school performance with developing their quality assurance has been embedded across the whole school provision. There is a full complement of governors who are supportive to the needs 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):