

Potterspurty Lodge School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Joanne Vyas
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Date of last inspection	14 November 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

Potterspurry Lodge offers education with boarding for up to 22 boys of the age range 8 years to 16 years. The school also provides places for day pupils, some of whom take part in evening activities. Founded originally as a Steiner school, the school retains few of the Steiner principles, but the community ethos and healthy living remain strong.

Many of the staff live on site, including most care staff. The main house is a large grade 2 listed building and accommodates some of the school classrooms, some boarding areas, the main office and medical room. Further boarding accommodation and school facilities are provided in various buildings adjacent to the main house.

The school is set in several acres of land providing a tranquil and spacious setting. A stream running into a small lake filled with various fish, where boys can fish for pleasure, marks the school boundary to one side. Another boundary is marked by a large vegetable garden, orchard and oakery, though these areas are out of bounds to students unless accompanied by an adult. A large field provides a football pitch, running track and large play area including climbing frames and swings. There is a skate park, tennis and basketball courts. Indoor facilities include a large sports hall, pottery and music room, a chapel and other educational facilities that can be used for extra-curricular activities.

The boarding accommodation consists of four self-contained units providing accommodation for groups of up to six boys. This accommodation is homely and comfortable. Boarding is available from Sunday evening to Friday, during term time only.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The quality of the boarding at this school is satisfactory. The majority of the National Minimum Standards are met, with some exceeded. The school has worked hard over this last year and has taken appropriate action to address all the recommendations contained in the previous report. These included improved records of meals, complaints and placement plans and notifying the appropriate authorities of notifiable events.

The school's ethos and underpinning philosophy is strong throughout, ensuring pupils live in a supportive and caring community within which boarders feel valued and safe. Boarders develop close relationships with each other and with staff. Boarders are happy to be living at the school.

Staff are focussed and committed to ensuring a good quality provision of health care for all boarders. A significant number of staff are suitably trained in first aid and provide appropriate care when pupils are ill or injured. There are clear procedures for the management and administration of medication. However, boarders who self-administer medication are not assessed or monitored and their medication is not appropriately stored to prevent access by other boarders. Also, despite regular auditing, some medication was found to be out of date. There are lots of opportunities for pupils to partake in physical activities, both on and off site. The school provides a varied, healthy diet which is of a high standard and which is greatly appreciated by the majority of pupils.

The safety and rights of both staff and pupils are protected. Staff are competent in their knowledge of the school's safeguarding procedures. Boarders said that if they are unhappy there are plenty of people they can talk to. Staff take them seriously and always 'sort it out'. The privacy of boarders is respected. The school has a written procedure for action when pupils are absent without authority. There are very few incidents of absconding from the school but these are dealt with appropriately. The school's recruitment procedures are robust ensuring all safety checks are carried out and pupils are protected.

Some pupils have experienced incidents of bullying but staff are pro-active and responsive to all bullying behaviour. Boarders said that bullying mostly takes place in the school rather than the hostels. The high staffing levels, vigilance and working practices adopted by the school go some way to reducing opportunities for bullying to occur. For example, staff work with pupils to develop their understanding of the diversity of their community and the importance of tolerance of others. Discussion with pupils supported this work takes place.

Staff view the students positively and there is usually a relaxed, family atmosphere in the hostels. However, this changes at lunch time in some hostels when day pupils join the boarders for lunch. At these times, behaviour can be disruptive and excitable. The behaviour of the pupils is not always managed well at these times. However, there is a minimal amount of physical intervention carried out in boarding and all staff have received appropriate training.

Staff are able to provide appropriate care for boarders and meet their individual needs with the knowledge and understanding they have of them. Individual support is detailed in each boarder's file and observations and discussions with staff showed that staff ensure each boarder's individual needs are met. Staff are positive in their approach to education and its value for boarders. There is communication each morning and evening between care and education staff

as well as a whole school meeting once a fortnight to discuss pupils, their challenges and their progress. Staff report this is very useful in creating a consistent approach to pupils across school.

Hostel meetings for boarders are held every week and recorded. There is a fixed agenda including hostel issues, bullying, activities, birthdays and complaints. Minutes include action to be taken and evidence diversity and tolerance are regular agenda items. There is also an active school council.

The overall standard of boarding accommodation at the school is good. Boarders' rooms and the facilities provided afford appropriate levels of privacy and are well maintained. Boarders describe feeling safe at the school and a number said they like their rooms. The school premises and grounds are spacious and well maintained with suitable provision for recreational activities.

The school has comprehensive risk assessments for most aspects of safety of the premises and grounds, including fire. Risk assessments are not completed for windows that may present a risk to boarders. All staff are given fire safety training during their induction and then annually. Fire drills are carried out on a regular basis and at different times of the day and night. Most fire safety equipment is checked regularly and a detailed record kept. Emergency lighting, although checked by contractors four times a year, is not checked as per the Fire Regulations i.e. monthly. All other health and safety procedures are carried out routinely. All visitors sign into the school and must show identification.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Evidence supports a consistent commitment to improving equality and diversity in practice. Pupils receive an individual service in the hostels which is designed to meet their personal needs. All staff have a good knowledge of the pupils they are working with ensuring their needs are consistently met. Staff work in partnership with parents and carers to ensure a good quality service where the ethos is centred around meeting the individual needs and aspirations of pupils.

The levels of staffing in boarding is sufficient to meet the needs of the boarders. Staff are committed, caring and competent. However, support for staff and the Head of Care is unsatisfactory. There is no formal appraisal system in place and staff rarely receive supervision. Although this is planned, it is often cancelled or cut short. The Head of Care receives no supervision currently. Although team meetings are twice a week, these are very short. However, staff report that the senior leadership team has an open door policy and there are plans to rectify the situation by providing more support for the Head of Care. There is an induction process for new staff, which includes guidance on safeguarding procedures as well as other school policies and procedures. A parent said, 'I always feel that Potterspurty Lodge have my son's best interests at heart and want him to achieve to his fullest extent'.

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 the policy and written guidance is implemented in practice for administering and storing medication, specifically with regards to security of medication that is self-administered and medication that is out of date (NMS 14.17)
- provide risk assessments for windows which present a risk to pupils (26.3)
- ensure pupils keeping and administering their own medication are assessed by staff as sufficiently responsible to do so and monitored to ensure medication is taken as prescribed (NMS 14.19)
- ensure all care staff receive at least one and a half hours one to one supervision from a senior member of staff each half term and an annual appraisal (NMS 30.2 and NMS 30.6)
- ensure regular testing of emergency lighting is performed in accordance with Fire Regulations (NMS 26.6).