

High Close School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Merryl Wahogo
Type of Inspection	Key

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Head / Principal	Alexander Paterson
Date of last inspection	20 September 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

High Close School is operated by Barnardos. It provides for day attendance and weekday boarding for pupils aged from eight to 17 years, with most boarders being of senior school age. The school takes young people who have been unable to succeed in mainstream school and may have been excluded from previous schools, and have statements of special educational need arising from emotional and behavioural difficulties. The range of additional specific special needs with which the school is working is broad, and may include young people with ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, autistic spectrum disorders, speech and language difficulties and visual and auditory impairment. Boarders are accommodated in four houses now with up to nine places in single bedrooms, but can accommodate an additional boarder sharing, for short periods. Each house has a designated staff team and unit manager. There is a separate unit for day and extended day pupils. The day unit has a separate dedicated staff team. The ethos of the school is to reward good behaviours, within the overall context of a behaviour management system called Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) in which all care and teaching staff receive training.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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 outstanding.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

There are a number of improvements based on recommendations from the previous social care report. More importantly, however, there are significant improvements in systems used to record and analyse incidents of concern. The school created a new post in order to facilitate this. These developments have been driven by both the school and Barnardos. There are also major and useful developments in relation to collaboration with outside agencies, such as the local Community Wardens, both inside school and in the community. The school continues with healthy menus which are mostly appreciated by the young people. One young person said 'Our

cook makes healthy and tasty food for us' and another said 'Vegetarian food is made just for me'. Staff make culturally appropriate food available when necessary and monitor this carefully. When staff give any medication to young people it is recorded thoroughly and accurately. This is even true when young people are taken abroad. Medication fridges are available for any prescriptions which need to be kept cool and the temperatures are monitored regularly. One young person said 'I feel good in this school, it is a good school where I feel safe' and another said 'I feel like I can talk to all the staff'. There are exceptionally secure and positive relationships between staff and young people. Unit staff take careful note of anything that raises child protection concerns and pass these on to the appropriate senior staff. The school's social worker and counsellor also work hard with young people, as well as outside agencies, to promote their safety. Staff respect young people's privacy and the process of beginning the day is calm and friendly. Staff speak quietly and gently at all times of day, although they can be firm when necessary. Although the young people know how to complain, they say that they talk to staff to resolve problems and so it is extremely rare for them to feel the need to make a formal complaint. Young people report a small amount of bullying, but say that staff deal with it well. Staff address bullying clearly and consistently, with young people being very much involved in the process. One young person said 'They're good at teaching people right from wrong'. Notices about bullying address issues such as not picking on people because of their colour. Staff record any incidents of poor behaviour particularly thoroughly and use clear rules about the behaviour that is expected from young people. This recording is now being transferred into the new database, allowing for easy and continuous monitoring of safeguarding. Staff are excited and not threatened by this development. The school's thorough recruitment processes, as well as detailed risk assessments, assist in keeping young people safe. The young people love the range of activities available to them, both collectively and individually. This includes annual trips to Goa and skiing trips. For example, several young people stated 'It's the best school I've ever been to'. One said 'There's a good choice of all the things I like to do' and another was particularly pleased to be able to take part in her hobby at another school. On the day of inspection many of the young people were involved in a wonderful performance of The Wizard of Oz. This was attended by pupils who wished to, as well as some parents and staff. There is a high level of collaboration between care staff and teachers. Both groups support the work of the other to the clear benefit of the young people. Teachers understand the behavioural objectives of the care plans and care staff help young people to achieve their educational targets. Equality and diversity are high on the agenda. Staff are improving policies and these influence practices. Staff and pupils are creative in finding solutions to diverse problems. All pupils have shown themselves to be able, at times, to be exceptionally understanding and flexible in order to meet other young people's needs. Young people feel so confident about being listened to well by staff, that they are unusually able to express their opinions. They continue to do this to individual staff as well as in the school council. There are thorough assessments in place when young people join High Close and staff ensure that arrangements meet their needs. There are well developed rewards schemes in both the units and the school as a whole. All units are bright and homely, and in a good state of repair. Young people are proud to show visitors around. Artwork around the units is very varied and includes African paintings and posters. One evening meal was taken outside on new garden furniture, which a young person had helped put together. The older boarders are helped towards leaving by being supported to become more independent; one unit is piloting changes that allow a student to make their own meals and eat them in their own room, if they wish. Staff give career advice and also assist in finding and setting up placements. This helps young people to feel that there is a bridge between High Close and their new setting. Parents and young people are very positive

about how well staff understand and meet the needs of the young people: 'They take care of everyone'; the school does well at 'Helping us if we're upset, giving us good advice and giving us a good education'; 'They've understood me'. Also one parent wrote this powerful statement 'This school saved our son'. Training opportunities for staff are excellent and they report high quality courses. This means that they can request specific pieces of training to meet their needs, and that they are then able to work confidently with a diverse range of young people. High Close uses Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) techniques to manage behaviour. This is working well and restraints are kept to a minimum. The previous Principal retired and the deputy appointed in his place has maintained, or even improved the quality of all aspects of the provision.

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):

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)

Annex A

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.