

# Pontville Residential School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Jeffrey Banham
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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	22 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**

Pontville is operated by the Witherslack Group of Schools. The group has a number of other schools and children's homes, mainly in the north west of England. The group have managed Pontville since April 2001. The school is located in a residential area of the market town of Ormskirk and is set in extensive grounds. A range of community facilities in the town are available within walking distance. The school provides day places and boarding for both boys and girls with social communication difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, including attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, Asperger's syndrome and epilepsy. The residential facility provides care from Monday to Friday afternoon during term time only.

### **Summary**

The inspection was announced and took place over two days. Staff and young people were involved in the visit which included observation of the normal routines of the residential facility and school during the day, the early evening and early morning. All of the key national minimum standards (NMS) relating residential care were examined.

The school provides a high standard of care to young people. Detailed care programmes based on comprehensive assessments ensure realistic goals are set for each young person. Care staff provide effective and committed support to develop the personal and educational potential of each young person and ensure that there is an enjoyable and nurturing environment in which young people can progress. Relationships between young people and staff are positive, structured yet informal. Care and education staff work well together to ensure integrated and consistent care and education programmes are provided. The commitment to the promotion of equality and diversity is high and all aspects of practice are clearly child-centred.

Young people's development is rigorously monitored and reviewed. The school can demonstrate improved outcomes for young people who clearly appreciate the support they are offered from well trained and enthusiastic staff. The school provides a homely and well maintained environment that enables young people to be safe and in which their dignity and self esteem are promoted. Both the whole school and residential team are well led and have a clear purpose and a set of values to which all staff subscribe. Staff are positive and enthusiastic about the young people for whom they care and the work the school does to support them.

During the inspection some areas for improvement were identified to which the school responded positively and which are identified in the report.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

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

The school is committed to continuous development and improvement. It has responded positively to all the recommendations made following the last inspection. Books and information leaflets are available throughout the residential areas to aid understanding of health and social issues. Parental consent to medical treatment has been obtained for all young people. Safety in the grounds has been improved by the installation of additional lighting. Young people are aware that they can contact a named person independent of the school should they wish to

discuss any issues relating to living at home or in the school. Involving young people in the compiling and understanding of their placement plans is now routine practice. A rigorous maintenance programme ensures the accommodation is maintained to a good standard throughout. The handbook for parents contains information about the complaints process and contact arrangements.

## **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

The school actively promotes the health care of each young person. Detailed assessments and placement plans set out the individual health needs of young people and the extent to which they are able to take control of their own health. Records of immunisations, however, are not always clear and do not provide staff with an effective tool for monitoring this aspect of health care.

Staff have a great deal of knowledge about the needs and abilities of the young people for whom they are responsible. The progress of each young person is regularly reviewed to ensure appropriate support is provided and identified tasks carried out. All young people are registered with their own or local doctors, dentists and opticians, and care and treatment is obtained from specialist health care professionals as required.

There is a strong emphasis on enabling young people to take control of their own health in so far as their needs and abilities will allow. Health care information is provided throughout the residential areas and young people are comfortable in discussing issues with staff. This approach provides a sound basis for young people to operate in the future when they move into a more independent environment.

Staff are well trained to support all aspects of health care. They successfully implement detailed and effective procedures, such as the administration of medication for example, to ensure young people are safe. Communication with parents is effective and appreciated by them.

Healthy eating is promoted and young people are offered food that is nutritious, balanced and varied. Young people are encouraged to be involved in choosing, buying and cooking food and mealtimes are clearly enjoyable social occasions.

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

The provision is good.

The safety of young people is given a high priority and is supported by a range of practices and procedures that are rigorously implemented by well trained staff. A successful balance is achieved between respecting the individuality and dignity of young people and ensuring they are safe by staff supervision. Privacy is respected by staff knocking on doors and young people's rooms and bathrooms having lockable doors. Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions in line with their assessed needs and abilities. They are provided with clear information about the process of making complaints and an independent person is available for them to contact should they wish. Young people are comfortable with talking to the staff, and such comments as 'You can trust the staff' were made more than once during the inspection visit.

Staff are trained in all aspects of child protection and aware of their responsibilities. Their practice is underpinned by clear policies and procedures and any allegations against staff are effectively undertaken and produce clear outcomes.

The school operates sound practices in relation to issues such as the prevention of bullying, for which there is a 'zero tolerance' approach and for any young people who go missing or have unauthorised absence from the school.

Young people's needs are assessed on admission and are subject to regular review. This process ensures that all aspects of behaviour and subsequent support are identified so that young people are protected and assisted to develop appropriate and acceptable behaviour. Detailed behaviour plans and risk assessments provide staff with a framework within which they can offer advice, guidance and consistency that promotes safe and positive interaction between young people and their peers and adults who care for them. Young people are central to the process at all times. The impact of their behaviour is spelled out by sympathetic staff and they are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions such as by routine de-briefing after any incident of restraint or physical intervention. Placement plans and reviews demonstrate the progress that young people have made whilst at the school.

A high priority is given to the creation and promotion of a safe and attractive environment both internally and in the school grounds. Robust health and safety processes and effective and responsive maintenance programmes provide an environment that is safe and as non-institutional as possible within the context of a large, older building.

The school operates the staff selection and recruitment processes of the Witherslack Group as a whole. These do not currently provide for the taking up of written references for staff who change jobs within the organisation, even if this is after a significant period of time, for example three years. This practice does not allow the school to explicitly demonstrate how staff are competent and safe to be employed.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The contribution made by residential staff to the education of young people is well established and involves close liaison with teaching staff. Activities on the residential unit consistently promote the development of young people in all aspects of their personal and educational development. Residential staff give effective and active support to ensure assessed needs are met. A range of processes, such as the Individual Care and Education Plan (ICEP) ensure young people are given achievable and practicable objectives to work to. They are given every opportunity to be central to the process and are clearly aware of and subscribe to the objectives set with them. Young people talk enthusiastically, for example, about their progress in shopping, cooking or using local facilities. Staff use their initiative to develop attractive and effective ways of promoting the involvement of young people and recording their successes.

The importance of leisure is recognised by staff who are committed to promoting the self esteem, health and social opportunities provided by a range of activities both on and off-site. Young people are encouraged to develop their own interests and experience new areas and topics. Staff share their own interests and enthusiasms, such as local history and the local environment, to provide new opportunities for learning and enjoyment. Young people are involved in planning and organising outings and clearly enjoy and learn from the experiences

they have. Young people are also encouraged to use and join facilities in the local community such as youth clubs and libraries. This enables them to develop contacts and promote their skills with young people from outside the school.

Young people are given individualised support in line with their needs and wishes. They are able to contact any member of staff with their concerns and by their comments demonstrate they are comfortable in doing so. Specialist support such as speech therapy and a person independent of the school are available for both the young people themselves and to provide support for the care staff. The school operates a 'team approach' that uses all available resources for the benefit young people.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The basis for every young person's care and support is the individual placement plan that sets out their assessed needs and how they will be met. The responsibilities of staff are clear and young people are involved at every stage of the creation of the plan and its subsequent implementation. The monitoring and review processes provide a sound foundation for measuring progress and ensuring that objectives that are set are practical, achievable and based on each young person's strengths and needs.

Each young person has an allocated key worker who meets regularly, both formally and informally, to discuss progress. The strength of the relationships between young people and staff is a significant attribute of the school. Staff are unfailingly positive, enthusiastic and committed to the development of the young people with whom they work. Staff provide clear yet flexible boundaries and set good examples from which young people can learn. The existence of mutual respect is a clear and demonstrable example of the success of the school's values and aspirations for young people, whatever their needs. Care and support is provided irrespective of ability, race, gender or ethnic origin and the promotion of equality of opportunity underpins all areas of practice.

Young people are provided with every opportunity, both formal through the school council and unit meetings, and informally through key worker sessions and involvement in reviews, to make their views known and take responsibility, as far as their needs allow, for their actions.

Young people are central to the admissions process and are involved at every stage. Contact with parents and family is promoted and supported by staff who are aware of the significance of maintaining close family relationships.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are able to and are encouraged to make choices about the clothing they wear outside school time. Staff support young people to take a pride in their appearance and develop skills in buying and choosing appropriate clothing. Staff have developed a variety of ways to support young people to take charge of their own spending money and by such items as DVDs, music and toiletries according to personal preference.

The residential units offer homely and domestic style accommodation that is well furnished and well decorated. Young people are supported to take a pride in their accommodation.

Bedrooms are warm and well furnished. Each young person has their own room which is lockable, and to which they are able to hold the key. Rooms are personalised and furnished with items of interest and significance to young people. Young people are proud to show off their rooms and discuss their interests and possessions and are clearly comfortable and secure living in the residential units. Bathrooms, showers and toilets are well equipped, maintained and decorated. It is not possible to use a sink near to two toilets if the shower is being used, and the disadvantage of this was pointed out by one young person.

Part of the residential provision is equipped as a semi-independence unit for older, more able young people. They are supported to develop skills and knowledge to assist their move into independence in so far as they are able. The development of independence and self-care skills is nevertheless part of the assessment and care plan for all the young people in the school. For those to whom it applies pathway plans are in place and care staff are fully involved in supporting young people in the development of self care skills and supporting transitions.

The location of the school supports its primary objectives and it is well situated to access all amenities and transport links. The local supermarket plays a particularly important part in the life of the young people at the school.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The aims and objectives of the school are clearly set out in the statement of purpose and all its policies, procedures and practices comply with the main objective of supporting the education and development of young people. Case records and staff records are comprehensive and detailed. The basic information describing young people, known as the 'pen picture', does not give any information about a young person's history before coming to the school, nor do the records identify who has parental responsibility for a young person. The staff communication book contains sensitive information about different young people and this provides a potential breach of confidentiality.

The school is well led, with a clear sense of its aims and objectives, a strong value base which underpins all its practices and a strong commitment to evaluating its practice and continuous improvement. The care teams are well organised and operate within sound policies and procedures. The high level of commitment to young people and a positive, child centred approach is a significant feature of the school and one to which young people clearly respond. Staff are well supported with high levels of supervision, both formal and informal, and a comprehensive training and development programme. Staff take pride in their work and in the school, this is evident and clear.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Every young person is supported in accordance with their individual needs, abilities culture and background.

Monitoring visits are carried out regularly. These do not always provide significant information relevant to the operation of the residential provision such as the time of the visit, if it was announced or unannounced and if young people and staff were spoken with. The records that are monitored, and information about which is included in the reports, such as physical interventions or sanctions, refer to the whole school and do not specifically identify matters pertinent to the residential 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):

- review the content and format of health care plans to ensure effective monitoring of health care issues (NMS 14)
- review the provision and siting of hand washing facilities to ensure they are accessible at all times (NMS 25)
- review the content and recording of the visits undertaken to monitor the welfare of the children in the school (NMS 33)
- review the content of young people's records to ensure information is clearly, effectively and confidentially recorded (NMS 18)
- review the system for recruiting staff to ensure all staff have at least two written references confirming their suitability for the post in which they are employed (NMS 27).