

Springfields School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Thomas Webber / Wendy Anderson
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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

Springfields is a Specialist Sports College and Local Education Authority School which provides residential accommodation for 68 young people of mixed gender, ranging in age from 10 to 17 years. All young people have been statemented as a result of emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties. However, most have additional complex needs. Currently the boys outnumber girls at the school and accommodates young people primarily from Wiltshire, although a small percentage are currently from other counties. Springfields school has had specialist sports college status since September 2005 and its second specialism is in Information and Communication Technology. The school's ethos is based upon cognitive behavioural therapy and aims to help young people recognise the causes and triggers of their behaviour, and so provide opportunities for them to realise their full potential both academically and socially. It also provides tuition in externally credited vocational areas for up to 400 students from 19 mainstream and special schools. All young people return home at weekends and at holidays. The school is situated in the town of Calne within ten acres of gardens. There are three mini football pitches, a full size football pitch, basketball, netball and tennis courts and a junior sized rugby pitch. There is a hydrotherapy pool, gymnasium and weight training room.

Summary

This announced key inspection took place over four days by two inspectors, covering all of the Residential Special Schools' key standards. This forms part of the annual inspection programme to examine the standard of care provided to young people. The care practices established by Springfields School continue to ensure that outstanding outcomes are achieved for young people accommodated where an outstanding standard of care is provided to young people. This was endorsed by the questionnaires received prior to and comments made during the inspection by the young people, their parents/carers and other professionals.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Action has been taken by the school to address the two recommendations made at the last inspection. These related to ensuring that controlled drugs are stored in a double locked cabinet and that all residential staff receive at least one and a half hours one to one supervision from a senior member of staff each half term. There were some deficiencies identified during this inspection in the recording systems within the school which were promptly addressed whilst the inspectors were present. These related to controlled medication, sanctions and formal supervision of staff.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people live in an environment where their health and emotional care needs are clearly identified and met. Young people have access to and are supported to attend all health care appointments to meet their needs with appropriate records being maintained. Individual health care plans and medical consent forms are also established for all young people. An in-house counselling service also contributes to the welfare of the young people by providing them with individual support to assist in developing their self-esteem and dealing with specific emotional

and behaviour issues. The counsellor also provides family therapy support through parenting groups. Lessons in Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) deliver information to young people on personal relationships and the physical aspects of sexual relationships, safe sex, and sexually transmitted diseases. All young people attend a 'Dangers of Smoking' session, with its message further reinforced by PSHE lessons and the school's non-smoking policy. Staff receive regular first aid training. Safe medication storage practices are maintained with all medication, including controlled medication, being kept securely in facilities in line with best practice. During the inspection, an improved system was established for the administration of controlled drugs. Staff administer all medication to young people with appropriate records being maintained. The school has achieved the National Healthy Schools Award which focuses on the young people's diet and exercise programme. The school actively promotes healthy eating for young people and a satisfactory and varied six weekly menu has been established in consultation with them, primarily through the school council. The menus provide young people with choices at all mealtimes and a selection of fresh fruit is readily available to them on a daily basis. Water fountains are situated around the school providing young people with easy access to water. Opportunities are available for young people to be involved in various aspects of shopping, preparation and the cooking of meals with the support of staff. This is particularly so for young people accommodated in the 'Hafan' unit. Mealtimes are conducted within a relaxed and congenial atmosphere. Young people commented very positively about the quality and quantity of meals offered, stating they receive plenty of food and with second helpings always being available. There are plans to extend and refurbish the main kitchen facilities of the school in May/June 2009. Exercise, sport and physical education take place throughout the day, with participation in various sporting activities during curriculum time adding to the optional activities held in the residential units in the evenings. The school also plays a key role in the Wales and South West Special Schools Sports Federation, and residential courses held by the school allow for participation in outdoor and adventurous activities.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The school actively promotes the rights of young people by ensuring that their privacy is respected with staff knocking on young people's bedroom doors before entering. Suitable locks are fitted to all bathroom, shower and toilet doors to also promote the dignity and privacy of young people. Opportunities are available for young people to meet with their families and visitors in private as well as making and receiving telephone calls. Staff also show good awareness of gender issues when dealing with young people of the opposite sex. All young people's information is kept securely and staff are clearly aware of the issue relating to confidentiality. The school has established clear policies and procedures for dealing with all complaints which are referred to within the school's welcome pack, a copy of which is given to young people prior to admission. Copies of this procedure are also readily displayed on each of the residential units' notice boards, discussed with the young people at the beginning of each term and regularly raised with them during their house meetings. The school supports and promotes young people to raise any issues openly and the process of making a complaint is clearly understood by the young people. Young people feel confident in discussing any issues with staff as well as knowing that they can discuss any issues of concern with the independent visitors or counsellor. The school has received no complaints since November 2006. Young people live in a safe environment where their welfare is promoted and they are protected from abuse. Staff have a good understanding of the needs of the young people and how to safeguard them. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place in respect to child protection. All staff

receive child protection awareness training through induction, supervision and yearly updates. The Headteacher and Head of Social Education are the designated child protection coordinators for the school. Three child protection referrals have been made since the last inspection which were appropriately referred. The school maintains a zero tolerance in respect to bullying. As a result, an anti-bullying policy is established which is conveyed to young people prior to admission and at the beginning of each term. Bullying is not seen as a particular issue within the school by both staff and young people, however, it is acknowledged that any incidents of bullying are promptly and effectively addressed by staff. A bullying slip system enables young people to anonymously report any incidents which are suitably recorded. Surveys are conducted by the school each term and involves all young people, allowing for the identification of potential bullies and victims. The surveys also assist the school in determining whether progress in addressing specific issues is successful. Parents of young people are invited to assist the school in working through individually identified issues. There is a clear system for the reporting and recording of any event where a young person goes absent without authority. Records show that there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of young people absconding since the last inspection. All absentees are recorded and monitored with all relevant parties being informed. The school assists young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour through the four progressive and sequential units. Movement between the units requires young people to sustain a period of appropriate behaviour, which in turn provides them with greater privileges, responsibilities and freedom. Each unit monitors and assesses the young people through a points system. It is a positive incentive scheme which the young people can access and where they are encouraged to achieve their individual targets. Sports, Information Communications Technology (ICT) and community work also impact on the behaviour of the young people, which helps them to develop leadership skills, self worth and confidence. The behaviour management system enables the staff to operate in a consistent and fair manner in dealing with the day to day issues of the young people. The young people are proud of what they achieve individually and in groups. Young people are clear about the expectations placed on them by the school and conduct themselves in a polite and well mannered way. The school also assist young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour through encouragement, reinforcement of the clear boundaries and recognition of positive behaviour together with the use of sanctions and physical intervention when necessary. Staff are trained in the use of physical intervention and appropriate records are maintained where this method of control is used. Records show that the use of physical intervention has significantly declined since the last inspection. The initial deficiencies identified at this inspection in the recording of sanctions applied have been rectified. These related to providing more detail of what constitutes inappropriate behaviour and the effectiveness of the sanction. The school has established clear health and safety policies and procedures to ensure that staff and young people are appropriately safeguarded. The school takes positive steps to keep young people and staff safe from the risk of fire and other hazards in accordance with Health and Safety and Fire legislation and guidance. A tour of the premises identified no significant health and safety issues. Young people and staff regularly practise fire evacuation procedures and the various fire safety records are kept up to date. Detailed risk assessments are carried out in respect to all activities undertaken by young people, to the building and with regard to young people. These are regularly reviewed and updated where appropriate. The school has established robust staff recruitment practices for the careful selection and vetting of all new staff to ensure the protection of young people. The files of the two newly appointed members of staff confirmed that all relevant checks had been carried out.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

All young people attend Springfields school and good cooperation and communication exists between the residential and teaching staff. The school is a specialist Sports College with ICT being the second specialist subject. The school continues to expand the vast range of sporting facilities offered to the young people. Other activities are also provided to meet the talent and interests of the young people. It also provides a number of vocational opportunities, such as catering, motor vehicle maintenance, building and construction, sport and hair and beauty. Activities undertaken during the school day are encouraged and built on by the residential staff who also assist the young people with their homework. Breakfast and after school clubs are organised for the young people, which tend to be sport orientated. There is a good balance between organised activities and free time. There are also age and gender appropriate activities provided. Good community contacts are encouraged by the life skills programme. Young people continue to raise money for local charities and have regular contact with local elderly peoples homes including hosting evenings of entertainment for them. Young people also make visits to local primary schools to assist with physical education. Various projects are undertaken to take the school out into the community and the young people in the community use the school facilities at weekends. The individual needs and wishes of the young people are clearly identified in a variety of plans with the school providing help, support and guidance as required. The young people have access to the Children's Rights officer, independent visitors and or the counsellor where they can discuss any issues affecting them.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are encouraged and supported to make decisions and contribute to and influence the way the units of the school are run. Young people are given every opportunity to express their views and opinions through a range of forums, such as house meetings, individual tutorials as well as to raise and discuss any issues on a day to day basis. An active and effective school council continues to operate which meets regularly, having sought the views of other young people on issues under consideration and has been instrumental in improving the facilities within the school. Young people live in a structured and very supportive environment where positive and relaxed relationships exist between the staff and young people which is very much based on mutual respect and understanding. Staff celebrate the progress and achievements of young people and are very committed to the care of young people. A warm, friendly and relaxed atmosphere has been created where young people can freely express their views about a range of issues which are listened to by staff. Staff undertake their duties in a caring and professional manner and young people are relaxed and at ease in their company. Young people commented very positively about the care and support provided to them by the staff which was reiterated by the young people's parents and various professionals. Other professionals also commented that young people receive a high level of care and benefit from living in a nurtured, structured, caring environment where clear boundaries exist. The school works well with other agencies, keeping the agencies well informed of any incidents and the progress made by the young people. Those agencies, who commented, described the school as being 'tremendous'. Young people's needs are clearly assessed and detailed care plans have been established which identify how their needs are met and contains input from young people. Young people's care plans are regularly reviewed and updated. Young people receive an annual review which is attended by them and considers their progress and whether the placement is still relevant. Staff are

committed to supporting young people to maintain contact with their home during school time either by phone, letters, overnight visits home, or by parents visiting them. Staff also ensure that family members/carers are kept informed about young people's wellbeing and progress in a variety of ways. These include the use of home-school diaries, young people's reviews and open days. Young people's parents/carers commented very highly about the care provided and are appreciative of the level of support provided to them by the school. Parents/carers commented that they are made to feel welcome and treated with respect by staff when they visit.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The life skills programme of the school aims to ensure that young people are provided with the opportunity to acquire a range of independent skills, in preparation for their life after school. Preparation for leaving care begins on the young person's first day at the school in line with its ethos and structure. However, this is given greater prominence when young people reach the Hafan unit, where they are expected to assume greater responsibility for the purchase, preparation and cooking of some food as well as undertaking some laundry duties. Young people are also supported in acquiring budgeting skills. The Connexions officer is routinely involved with older young people and, in conjunction with the school, works to identify further placements for young people after they leave the school. Young people live in one of four units within Springfields which are maintained to a good standard, being clean, tidy and comfortable. Attention has been given to creating a homely environment for young people. The school continues to make improvements to the accommodation to enhance the young people's living environment. The units provide sufficient communal space to meet the individual and collective needs of the young people together with sufficient bath, shower and toilet facilities which are fitted with appropriate locks to doors to promote privacy and dignity. Not all young people are provided with their individual bedrooms, particularly within the first two houses. However, young people are able to personalise their bedrooms/individual spaces to their own tastes.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school has established a clear Statement of Purpose which has been updated to accurately describe the level of service provided to young people. The Statement of Purpose together with a range of other relevant documents is part of the welcome pack which provides young people and their parents with clear information they need to know about the school. The school is committed to providing sufficient staff on duty throughout the day and night to meet the individual and collective needs of the young people. Higher staffing levels are provided within Phoenix unit to meet the ethos and structure of the school with lower staffing levels within the three other units. Staff turnover continues to be low. Agency staff are not used, with the school relying upon existing staff to cover for any short term staff shortage. This ensures that consistency and continuity of care is maintained. Some teaching staff participate in after school and unit activities. Management cover is always readily available as well as providing an on call system at night. Young people are looked after by a staff team who are trained to meet their needs. All new staff are provided with a thorough induction programme and they are also supported and encouraged to update their knowledge and skill base by attending appropriate training. The residential staff commented very positively about training opportunities available to them which includes joint training days with education staff. The Head and Deputy Head of

Social Education hold the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 4. At least 80% of residential staff have obtained the NVQ Level 3 in the Care of Children and Young People. This ensures that young people receive care from a sufficient number of qualified staff. Young people are looked after by a staff team who are themselves properly managed and supported in safeguarding and promoting their welfare. Effective systems have been established to ensure good communication is maintained between different staff disciplines within the school to ensure that young people receive consistency of care. Within the residential units weekly staff meetings and daily handover meetings are held which enable staff to keep up to date with regard to all issues pertaining to their individual units and the young people. An open door policy is established within the school with regard to supervision where staff can receive as much as they want. Staff feel very well supported where they receive both formal and informal supervision. Annual appraisals and formal supervision is provided to staff at the recommended intervals. However, it was noted during the inspection, that the quality of the supervision records was variable. A new system was put in place during the inspection to address the deficiency. The school maintains the range of records required which are clear, comprehensive and detailed. Evidence is available to confirm that the records are monitored by both management and governors. The Headteacher, who is supported by a strong management team, provides clear vision for the future and whose leadership is infectious. Staff are very committed to providing the best level of care and personal support to young people and are constantly looking at ways of improving this. Staff feel valued and that their opinions are listened to. Other professionals commented that the school has a 'can do' attitude.

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)

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.