

Southfield School

Inspection report for residential special school

Unique reference number	SC011332
Inspection date	16 October 2008
Inspector	Merryl Wahogo
Type of Inspection	Key

Address	Southfields Special School Gipsy Lane WOKINGHAM Berkshire RG40 2HR
Telephone number	0118 9771293
Email	
Registered person	Wokingham District Council
Head of care	Nick Harvey
Head / Principal	Mike Pedley
Date of last inspection	25 June 2007

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Cripins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

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

Southfield school is a purpose built secondary school for boys, aged 11-16, who have experienced behavioural and emotional difficulties. It accommodates up to 68 pupils, at any one time, 16 of whom may be resident in the hostel. Southfield school has its own grounds and is situated in a residential area not far from the Wokingham town centre.

Summary

This was the annual announced inspection conducted over two days, and covered all the key standards of care provided. The school has met all the standards and there are outstanding aspects in most outcome areas. There are currently 13 boys resident in the hostel and they are very positive about the experience of living there, particularly in relation to the activities available to them. Staff have made significant improvements in helping the boys to work towards calmer and more sociable behaviour, through a new rewards scheme. The young people benefit from an exceptionally stable and cohesive staff group, managed by a highly dedicated Head of Care and senior management team. The staff team take active steps to support equality and diversity principles, working in co-operation with the local authority on this and other initiatives. The judgements in this report have been made using new benchmarking guidance that was implemented in April 2008. Information about this guidance can be found on the Ofsted website. The new basis for making judgments is not directly comparable with that used previously.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The Head of Care has ensured that all previous recommendations have been acted upon. As a result, there is now a lockable medication fridge in the treatment room. Everyone agrees that meals have improved, but that there is more work to be done. The Head of Care conveys to the cook, boys' opinions and requests. The school has instituted a new rewards scheme, based on the daily completion of half termly targets. The scheme pays small amounts for every target achieved and interest on money that has been saved. This money can then be spent on personal items and activities. This encourages boys, not only to achieve their targets, but to save. Targets used to be displayed as text, but staff now produce colourful posters, entirely personalised. For example, there is on each one an image of failure and of success, relevant to the particular boy. This might, perhaps, be a footballer getting a red card or scoring a goal. Also, each poster has a key idea for a positive thought that the boy can use to avoid unwanted behaviours. As a result, boys are now crystal clear about what their targets are and whether or not they have achieved them during the day.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Southfield boys are generally healthy and not in need of a lot of medication. They say that if they are a little ill they are looked after in their bedrooms and if they are very ill, staff take them home. Staff do take them to appointments with opticians and dentists when necessary. There is a treatment room for the administration of any medication that is needed. All medicines are stored securely and administration records are thorough and accurate. Parents sign to give permission for the administration of any medication necessary. Although staff keep medical

administration record sheets on the boys' personal files, there is no summary of their current prescriptions. This means that there is no quick and easy way to check what a boy may need and creates a risk of mistakes being made. The school has adopted a healthy eating policy, in line with the local initiative. The senior management team have worked hard, over the last year, in consultation with the boys, to improve school meals. They are, however, constrained by both the decisions of the local council and the catering firm. The school caterers provide plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. Staff encourage the young people to eat healthy food when they are off-site and school meals contain very little salt. Unfortunately, this means that although boys and staff agree that there have been improvements, some meals are still bland and the boys are not enthusiastic about the food. Whilst the meal at dinner time is calm and relaxed, young people enter and leave the dining hall at lunch time, in a rather disorganised fashion. This creates situations in which behaviour can get out of hand.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Boys report that their privacy is respected by staff and all their personal care is carried out in private. The young people talk to staff if they have concerns and are clear that they can make formal complaints if they wish. The Children's Rights officer, who visits the school, advocates for them on occasion. All complaints are respected and clearly recorded, as are the responses to them. Although no young people spoke of being unhappy with the outcome of any complaint, the complaints forms lack space for boys to sign to confirm that the outcome is satisfactory to them. Southfield School have a serious and thorough attitude towards absolutely every aspect of safeguarding the young people in their care. To this end, they ensure that all necessary policies and procedures are in place. Whilst school and care staff all work with the boys to promote their ability to keep themselves safe, they also make use of a number of other professionals. One such person, employed by Southfield to deliver pastoral support, provides a strong link between home and school. Equally, staff have developed excellent working relationships with a wide range of outside agencies such as education welfare officers and the police, to support this area of work. For example a member of the police comes in to talk to the boys about firearms and drugs. Staff are clear about child protection policies and procedures, including confidentiality issues. The Head of Care provides regular child protection training updates to ancillary staff as well as care staff. Southfield staff record all instances of reported bullying, and work with the young people involved to reduce it. They also work closely with Wokingham council, in relation to cyber bullying. The boys report some bullying in the school, but less in the hostel. All staff work closely with each other and parents to maximise school attendance. Staff immediately record any instances of boys absconding and report this to police and parents whenever necessary. They refer to risk assessments to judge how quickly this should happen. Staff have introduced new ways of reminding boys of their goals in terms of improved behaviour, as well as a new rewards system for success. This is proving to be popular with boys and staff alike and also to be more effective than the old systems. There are thorough policies and procedures about best practice in behaviour management and staff adhere well to these. Their recording of sanctions is thorough as is their recording of restraints, when they have to use them. Staff are enthusiastic about training that they get from a member of Wokingham council staff, in relation to combating racism. The school adheres to Wokingham's policy on racism and records instances of racial abuse and how it has been dealt with. The Head of Care maintains thorough and up-to-date risk assessments. He also ensures receipt of confirmation from outside agencies, used by the school, that their equipment is properly and regularly checked. There are regular fire drills, especially when new boys arrive. Also, staff

ensure that all systems, such as fire equipment and emergency lighting, are checked at regular intervals. The person responsible for site maintenance checks water temperatures and records these. The kitchen staff keep the kitchen clean and orderly. Two staff completed basic food hygiene courses in 2008 and the kitchen has been confirmed as being of a high standard by the Environmental Health officer, during the last year. The cook checks and records all necessary temperatures to ensure the safety of food. Although there has not been much recruitment over the last year, Southfield ensures that thorough procedures are in place and records are kept in an orderly fashion.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The boys who are resident, access all the educational opportunities provided by the school. This includes up-to-date methods of addressing emotional literacy, as well as the use of organisations such as Connexions. Staff report improved communication between the hostel and school, with two handovers every day. Also, there is now a computerised system to improve staff access to daily information. Some teachers run after school clubs with the boys, such as cookery and science. In addition, teaching staff might have dinner with the boys on days when they are working late. Boys can access a wide variety of activities, within the hostel and school grounds, during the evenings. One boy said 'It's the best school I've ever been to', when referring to the activities. There are also good activities available off site, such as an animal care course. Boys proudly display certificates of achievement and trophies in their bedrooms. Southfield ensures that every aspect of the young people's care is highly individualised. This is supported by enabling them to have appointments with counsellors, health professionals and many different therapists. An external trainer comes in to work with some boys on anger management and is said to be excellent. Where necessary, the school pays for these sessions.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The Head of Care has introduced a system that allows boys to choose items such as duvet covers and desk lamps for their bedrooms. As a result, these are now much more individualised and reflect the boys' personalities and hobbies. There is a school council, on which boarders are represented, and the head of care is planning a residents' council. Boys can also express their opinions and decisions during meetings with their key workers and at the meetings held after school. There are excellent relationships between staff and the boys, based on a very thorough understanding of their needs. These relationships are generally relaxed and respectful on both sides, even when the boys become distressed or angry. Staff use a checklist to ensure that when new boys arrive in the hostel, they are introduced to all necessary aspects of how it works. Staff are passionate about trying to ensure that most young people move on from the hostel to an appropriate provision. Where possible, they support boys to return to living at home. All decisions are taken in consultation with the boys and their parents or carers and plans are developed to facilitate smooth transition. Outside agencies are involved, as much as possible, in building young people's confidence and sense of purpose. Staff assess the boys' needs over a period of time, following their admission to the school. They then develop a thorough placement plan, detailing how these needs will be met. Every boy has both short term and long term behavioural targets and is helped to recall the short term ones on a daily basis. Staff also help the boys learn to take responsibility for their behaviour, in the context of their targets. The placement plans contain absolutely all necessary information, including information

about contact with the family. These plans are updated regularly. There is a great deal of communication with parents, even though the boys go home every weekend. Hostel staff do at least two home visits a year, in addition to any visits undertaken by the pastoral care officer. The latter, recently undertook a parenting skills course to help her work with parents more effectively. Parents usually ring care staff when they have information or concerns to pass on, but occasionally do ring the pastoral care officer, reflecting their trust in her.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

There is a small but lovely garden at the front entrance, which staff and boys have developed over the years, winning awards in the process. There is also a greenhouse, in which they grow some vegetables. Lounges look homely and contain all the necessary fittings and furnishings. One has a bean bag as well as chairs and sofas. The boys have chosen some aspects of the soft furnishings in the lounges, as well as original art works. The hostel premises are generally in good condition, but bathrooms and toilets are down for refurbishment in the near future. Some notices are located in the corridor, to avoid bedrooms looking institutional. Bedrooms are big enough and are well decorated. There is some use of CCTV within the hostel corridors and although local authorities and parents are made aware of this, they are not invited to sign their agreement to its use. This means there is no evidence of their agreement, which is required by the standards.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The Statement of Purpose is detailed and supported by information in the staff handbook and residential guide for pupils. The latter is written in a child-friendly way and has pictures as well as text. Staffing is a little tight, since the school have been unable to recruit a new deputy head of care. The senior management team have, however, handled this well and provide reliable support to care staff on a daily basis. There is a strong sense of team work, with staff being very appreciative of each other's contributions. The senior management team provide excellent support to care staff and are seen to be accessible and helpful. There are regular team meetings and care staff report regular informal and formal supervisions. Ancillary staff are supervised by either the bursar or the site manager, and the stability of this staff team indicates the good working relationships that exist. There is a regular weekly rota and the one person who came from an agency during the last year has become a permanent member of staff. This and the lack of staff turnover, lends a sense of continuity and homeliness to the boys. It also reflects good management skills. The Head of Care ensures that staff start NVQ3 qualifications as soon as possible, after joining the team. As a result, all care staff except the newest addition, have NVQ3 and the Head of Care has NVQ4 and a diploma in management studies. The Head of Care also ensures that staff are up-to-date in Team Teach procedures and in child protection and makes other training opportunities available. This means that staff are confident in their work with the boys, which is reflected in the fact that the boys have no complaints about them. The Head of Care is exceptionally thorough in his monitoring of all the necessary documents. As a result of this and his close working with his team, he is constantly aware of events and trends in the hostel. There is a committed board of governors, who visit the school regularly. One governor completes regular monitoring visits and writes up reports of her findings. Although staff do not know what she might focus on during any particular visit, they take place in

conjunction with other planned meetings. This means that none of them can really be described as unannounced, and the standards do ask for some unannounced monitoring visits.

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
----------	--------	----------

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- create a laminated front sheet, for each boy's personal file, showing current prescribed medications . NMS 14
- consider new ways of organising lunch, to create a calmer, more orderly atmosphere. NMS 15
- create a space on bullying and complaints sheets, for the boy to record whether or not he is happy with the outcome. NMS 4 and 6
- ensure that parents and the relevant local authorities are requested to sign their agreement to the use of CCTV. NMS 23
- ensure that a proportion of regulation 33 visits are unannounced. NMS 33