

# Coln House

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Caroline Jones / Elizabeth, Claire Price
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<b>Address</b>	Coln House Special School Horcott Road FAIRFORD Gloucestershire GL7 4DB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01285 712308
<b>Email</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Chris Clarke
<b>Head of care</b>	Chris Clarke
<b>Head / Principal</b>	
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	29 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**

Coln House is a residential special school catering for boys and girls aged nine to 16 years. Weekly boarding is available for 26 boys and five girls, the school has an additional 26 places for day pupils. The boarding accommodation is divided into five house areas providing small group living. A small cottage is available for independence training. All pupils have behavioural, emotional, social and associated learning difficulties. The school is maintained by Gloucestershire County Council and is situated on the edge of the Cotswold market town of Fairford.

### **Summary**

This key inspection of the school was announced so that an inspection programme could be developed. All of the key National Minimum Standards for residential special schools applicable were inspected. The judgements in this report have been made using new bench marking guidance that was implemented on 01.04.08. 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. Coln House is a good school where young people are given clear boundaries and effective incentives to help them achieve. The young people are extremely positive about their school, summarised by one young person wrote 'this school is the best'. The school is strong in being open with and encouraging young people, offering young people new experiences and activities where they are able to learn informally, establishing a positive image for the school in the community, supporting young people and their families, and arranging work experience. To achieve this the school has strong, enthusiastic and committed leaders, caring, well motivated staff, efficient recording systems, and positive relationships between staff and young people. There are some things to improve the service and safety of young people which have been started but are not yet fully in place. These were the recommendations from the last inspection, which was only seven months ago. In addition there are risks to young people's safety whilst a record of any accident is not kept in the school. The school continues to operate successfully whilst also taking on the management of another special school in the county.

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 was asked to reduce the risks to young people by consistently undertaking and recording further checks when recruiting new staff. Whilst there have been some improvements when recruiting new staff not all of the actions for safe recruitment are being followed. However the school bursar, who is responsible for recruitment checks, has only been in post for six months and has not completed safer recruitment training. The school governing body were reminded that they should be undertaking visits each half term to monitor the service you young people. A programme of visits has been organised with governors making a written report following each visit. However the reports do not cover all of the points such as checking records of complaints, sanctions and physical interventions.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are helped and encouraged to be healthy when they are staying at Coln House School. The school finds out about each young person's medical history. The school nurse

makes sure that the right members of staff know any important information such as if somebody uses an asthma inhaler, or has an allergy. The school nurse talks with young people, their parents or carers, doctors and specialists if the young person has a health problem or concern. The nurse writes a health plan when it is needed and will arrange for staff to be trained if a young person has a health need which is new or different. All the young people know that they could go to the school 'sick bay' if they are unwell when at school. Where, in the words of one young person, 'they would look after you like you were their own kids'. As well as the nurse who will attend to minor injuries there are other staff who are trained in first aid always available. The nurse and other staff at the school are very careful in looking after young people's medicines. The nurse has introduced medicine charts, which show and record clearly the medicines a young person needs and can take. Young people learn about keeping healthy in the Personal, Social and Health education programme. Young people have numerous opportunities to take exercise during the school day and in the activities programme. Young people have healthy and nutritious meals at school. The school keeps chickens and grows some of its own vegetables in its inspiring and popular horticulture project. Young people are encouraged to try different foods. The new catering supervisor has talked with and included suggestions from the young people in the new menus. The young people eat together in their house groups, and can have drinks and snacks outside the main meal times. The school provides suitable meals for young people with special dietary needs such as for vegetarians or for religious reasons. If a young person does not like the planned meal, the staff find something else for them to eat. Catering staff have been trained in food hygiene and the school has taken action following the Environmental Health Service inspection.

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

The provision is good.

Young people are protected and safe when they stay at Coln House School. Staff know about keeping information about young people safe and private. In the boarding houses staff, when supervising, are careful not to embarrass young people when they are showering or changing. Staff are open with the young people and talk to them if they believe that they are putting themselves at risk or have brought something into the school that they should not have done. The school staff are all trained in and know about procedures to keep young people safe. The local Safeguarding Board reports that the school has made 'appropriate referrals' to them and contributes to meetings when necessary. All of the young people report that they can talk to somebody if they are worried or unhappy. The complaints procedure is well publicised. The school culture is one of listening to young people and being open. Young people know about the school's 'bullying form' and as stated by a young person they 'tell staff who get it sorted' if there are any incidents of bullying. Staff are able to respond quickly to incidents arising anywhere on the school campus by using 'walkie talkie' radios. Young people rarely leave the school without permission. Staff know and follow procedures if young people are absent. The local police constable is known at the school, is involved and along with the staff seeks to talk with young people about alternative actions to walking out. Young people are encouraged to behave well with clear rules and incentives which are seen as 'fair'. Young people's achievements are regularly and publicly recognised such as in assemblies. When young people are seen to make an effort this is swiftly recognised and rewarded. Young people know the likely consequences for poor or unacceptable behaviour and as some young people state they are 'keeping me out of trouble' and are 'helping with my anger and problems'. The school keeps very good computer records of incidents which are used to track trends and identify patterns of behaviour. Records of when the school exclusion unit is used are no longer being kept as

required, this makes them difficult to monitor. Young people's safety is promoted by the regular testing and checks carried out on the fire alarms, gas and electrical equipment and installations. The staff have access to training and advice about health and safety. Staff understand about making and recording assessments of risk for people, activities and the building. These are used positively to enable a wide range of activities to be undertaken safely. The school follows County Council procedures for reporting and recording any accidents using electronic forms. However, without copies of the reports being kept, the school is not able to review accidents. Young people are protected from unsuitable staff by checks made on new staff. However, explanations for gaps in employment history are not recorded, references from current or last employers have not always been taken up or verbal checks made with all referees and previous employment with children or vulnerable people. There are some risks to young people whilst these are not completed when recruiting new staff.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The school operates a 24 hour curriculum. Young people are given outstanding support, access to an exceptional range of opportunities and encouragement in their education. Teaching and residential staff work very closely together and help young people to learn in different ways. All of the young people know that residential staff give them time and space for their school work. A cottage on the school campus is used to give older pupils an opportunity to prepare for independent living. Young people at the school are actively involved in several projects in the Fairford community, such as improving an area of the river, planting flowers in the market place, litter picking and painting a bus shelter. The school enjoys a positive image in the local area with neighbours as reported by the Fairford Mayor 'recognising and appreciating' the work that pupils do for others. The young people know that when they need help and support, in the words of one person 'all staff are specialized to do that'. In addition the school arranges for young people to see other specialists such as educational psychologist, education officer, or a counsellor.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are fully involved in making decisions about their own lives. They all attend 'meetings about their progress and future'. Representatives from each residential group take part in school council meetings which happen three times a year. Comments from young people are taken seriously and suggestions made are positively received and acted on. As a result of young people's suggestions, changes including additional activities and equipment, different activities and jobs for younger people and improvements in the houses, have been made. Young people have clear plans, setting out what help they need and how the school will help them. The young people, and their carers take part in saying what is included in these plans. A young person may also have other plans written such as for their health or to help with their behaviour. The school encourages and rewards young people as they make progress. The incentives such as allowing young people to go into the community and an increased range of activities are successful in encouraging progress. Young people's plans are regularly formally reviewed. The school has good relationships with young people's families and carers. Diaries pass between home and school as well as school staff talking to families about any incidents or concerns. Young people themselves are able to maintain contact with their families whilst they are at school. Families are encouraged to become involved with activities at the school and be part

of plans to help their child. The school's liaison officer is very valuable in developing the school's relationship with families and so helping young people to progress.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

The Coln House staff team make the best use of the resources available to them to the benefit of young people. The residential accommodation is good, it is pleasantly decorated, furnished and equipped. Young people are 'proud of their living space' and most have personalised their bedroom area with pictures and posters. The school buildings' listed status and budgets place limitations on what can be achieved. However, a rolling programme for re-decoration and attention to minor repairs makes the school a good environment to live in. The school helps young people to prepare for their independence. The cottage in the grounds is well used, giving young people the opportunity to experience living alone. Other opportunities to prepare young people for adult life include work experience placements, attending college courses, and 'life skills' sessions.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Coln House School runs as a residential special school for young people as set out in its Statement of Purpose. Young people's families and professionals are given information about the school and how it is run. The statement is reviewed by the head teacher and governing body. Information about boarding is clear and the booklet for young people is easy for a new boarder to understand. The school has plans to make documents more accessible for young people by using 'widget symbols' as well as words. Staffing levels in the school are high and the young people say that staff are 'caring' and 'understand them'. There is consistency in the staff working in individual house groups and at night. The number of staff needed for each group is affected by the numbers and needs of the young people attending as well as the activity itself. The staff themselves are well supported. They have formal performance management meetings each term, daily staff briefings, and weekly staff meetings. Staff are supported and given an opportunity to talk with their manager after any significant incident. The school is successful in helping young people by having a consistent and cohesive staff team. Individual staff are encouraged to take on additional responsibilities and developments for the school. The school has a strong leadership team who ensure the efficient running of the school. This has been recognised by the local authority in asking the head teacher and head of care to oversee the management of a second special school in county. There is regular monitoring of records and review of policies and procedures. External agencies are positive in the achievements of the school, as one visiting professional wrote the school provides young people with 'a high quality service'.

## **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):

- fully implement safer recruitment practices (NMS 27)
- maintain an accident log of all accidents occurring at the school (MNS 19)
- ensure that visits by a member of the governing body to the boarding provision each term cover the points listed in standard 33.3. (NMS 33)



## 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.**