

Elemore Hall School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Leonard Hird
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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

Elemore Hall School is a residential special school catering for children with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. The school is a large converted country house in its own extensive grounds. The school's residential facilities are located in the main school building and comprise of two residential units, each having their own living and sleeping areas.

The school provides residential care and education for children of secondary school age, from 11 years old up to 16 years old, who have a statement of special educational need. Residential care is provided at the school from Monday to Friday, during term time for up to 25 children. The school provides, as an alternative to its residential services, an extended school day service for children residing in County Durham.

Summary

The purpose of the visit to the school was to carry out an announced inspection of all of the key national minimum standards relating to Residential Special Schools. The key national minimum standards were inspected in all outcome areas. The living accommodation at the school is providing a safe and caring and enabling environment, which is positively supporting the needs of young people. The school is performing well in all outcome areas but most especially in the areas of Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoying and Achieving and Organisation.

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 has addressed the four recommendations made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

There are well-managed and robust policies and procedures in place, to ensure the health and well-being of the young people. Excellent systems are in place, to ensure that when medication is being administered by the residential staff, it is properly dispensed and accurately recorded onto the young person's medication file. A record of parental consent for the administration of medication and emergency first aid treatment is also kept on this file. Those residential staff who administer medication have completed a recognised training course, in the safe handling and administration of medication and first aid. The school works in close partnership with many of the local doctors, to ensure that a 'split script' system is used for the prescription of medication for young people who attend the school. Only prescribed medications are kept at the school. Medications are kept securely, in an approved medication cabinet within the school's medical room. Young people are registered with their own doctors and other health professionals, near to where they live. However, the school will if necessary provide staff and transport to support young people in attending their health appointments during the school day, if their parents are unable to do so. If a young person takes ill whilst at school, then staff will make contact with the parents and the young person will be taken home. Young people spoken with confirmed that when they were unwell, the staff looked after them in a caring way.

Young people take their meals in the large and very pleasant dining hall. There are a number of different choices of food available from the menu, including a vegetarian choice. The meals are well prepared, cooked and healthy in content. All of the meals are prepared in the school's large kitchens. The catering staff take full account of any specialist dietary or cultural needs of the young people. The school has achieved the healthy schools award, in recognition of the hard work it has undertaken to ensure young people eat healthily. The school is thoroughly committed to ensuring that young people are fully aware of the need to eat healthily and to take part in regular, enjoyable physical activity. Young people commented 'that the meals at the school are nearly always good and that they try to eat healthily when not at school'. Young people can choose from a selection of healthy snacks, fruit and drinks at night in the houses before going to bed. Young people are actively encouraged to take part in physical activity, as well as eating a balanced diet.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

A comprehensive policy and procedure is available for members of staff at the school, on how to deal with confidentiality and privacy in the residential houses. Information including that of a third party, is kept securely in locked filing cabinets. Members of staff confirmed that they fully understand the reasons why all of the information concerning young people, must be treated in a confidential manner at all times. Young people said that the members of staff working in the residential houses, fully respect their right to privacy and treat them with the utmost respect.

The school ensures that there are very effective systems in place, for the recording and addressing of complaints made by young people. Information is being displayed in a number of different formats throughout the school and the houses for young people, on how to make a complaint. Young people spoken with confirmed that they knew how the complaints system worked within the school, but that they had no complaints about life in the residential houses. When a complaint has been made by a young person, it has been dealt with in a timely manner, well recorded and documented by the school in the complaints book. Advocacy services are readily available for young people to use and the school makes use of external agencies for this service. Information is displayed throughout the school and the houses, on how to contact these agencies either by telephone or email.

Robust policies and procedures are in place for the safeguarding of young people at the school. All members of staff receive regular, recorded training, in dealing with the safeguarding of young people. Full records are being kept, when members of staff undertake or update this training. The Local Safeguarding Children's Board policies, procedures and guidance documentation are readily available to all members of staff, either in a hardcopy form or by accessing the local authorities intranet site. Full and accurate records are kept of safeguarding issues when these have been referred to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. All of these records are being kept securely and confidentially in the school's designated safeguarding officer's room.

The systems used by staff to counter bullying within the school are very good. Excellent systems are in place to record, monitor and deal with incidents of bullying. The school addresses any type of bullying, including cyber or text bullying very quickly and supports both parties in dealing with the often complex issues surrounding these cases of bullying. Risk assessments

are undertaken on a regular basis, to try and avoid incidents of bullying in any areas of the school, its grounds or in the wider community.

If a young person goes missing whilst at the school, there are very good systems in place to address the problem. Full records are being maintained and monitored by the school, of when young people go missing from school and there is a debrief with the young person on their return. However, there have been no young people absenting themselves from the residential houses since the last inspection.

Elemore school has excellent systems in place, to encourage young people to behave positively. There have been very few recorded cases of disruptive behaviour occurring on the residential unit. Members of staff have a very positive way of working with residential pupils and this practice is encouraging young people to be well behaved. All of the members of staff have received training in de-escalation and restraint techniques. Comprehensive records are kept of this annual training in de-escalation and restraint techniques. If a restraint has had to be used on a young person, the school has a very good recording system in place. This details how the incident was dealt with by staff and it also gives the opportunity for the young person concerned to make comment about their perspectives on the incident. All of this information is regularly monitored by the head of care and the head teacher. The recorded information is also monitored by the local authorities visiting officer on a monthly basis. Young people spoken with indicated that they could not remember the last time a restraint had been used in the house unit.

Elemore school has comprehensive systems in place, to ensure the safety of all types of equipment being used at the school, including vehicles and kitchen equipment. Full and regularly updated recorded risk assessments are in place on the building and the school site. Thorough records are also maintained at the school of all fire drills, practices and electrical equipment checks that have taken place.

All the members of staff who are employed at Elemore school have undergone a rigorous recruitment process, prior to their employment at the school. The school uses the corporate recruitment and employment procedures of Durham County Council. Information is maintained confidentially and securely on members of staff employed at the school and their personal records include information on their employment history, Criminal Records Bureau checks and the reference checks made by the school.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Each young person attending Elemore school has a statement of special educational need. This details the needs and requirements of the young person and how the school will meet them. This information is maintained on individual young people's files and is regularly reviewed by the school and the other statutory services involved in the placement plans. Members of the residential staff team are fully involved in the day-to-day educational programme of each young person. Regular handovers take place between educational and residential staff during the course of the day. Members of staff fully promote and support young people to succeed in all of their educational subjects. Extra support is readily given by members of staff, to help each young person to achieve their desired outcome. Full records of educational progress and attainment are being maintained by the school. Achievements of young people who are attaining their personal goals are fully celebrated within the school community and beyond. Young people spoken with confirmed that they are being supported by all of the residential staff team to

help them do well. A very wide range of leisure activities, including football, keep fit, badminton, swimming and golf, are being made available to young people at the school. Young people are being fully encouraged to take part in physical activities, as part of their healthy living programme. The choice of leisure activities being offered each night, takes into account the individual needs and abilities, as well as the likes and dislikes of the young people. All of these activities are open to both residential pupils and extended day pupils to take part in.

Each young person has their own individual residential key worker to work with at the school. They also have a personal education tutor, who liaises with the key worker in regard to the progress that the young person is making in the school. The staff team have developed close working relationships with both parents and the other agencies involved in looking after the young person, to keep them fully updated of the progress of the young person. Every term each young person has a personal achievement meeting at the school, where their progress is discussed with them and their parents, to assist young people to help set achievable personal goals. Statutory reviews and in-house review meetings are occurring at the appropriate time intervals and they are being fully documented in the young people's files. Young people commented that they could influence decisions being made at these meetings by their attendance and this led to them often improving the outcomes for themselves.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The school council meets regularly and involves young people working in partnership with each other and members of staff in the decision making process of the school. These meetings are enabling young people to become more involved in the running of the school, particularly in areas that will affect the whole school population. There are regular, recorded house meetings taking place, where young people can put their points of view over, as to what should be happening in their house. Questionnaires are sent out to parents and young people each term, to enable them to express their views on the way the school is running. The results of these questionnaires are analysed and responded to by the school's management team. There is a school's newsletter, which is written and edited by the young people. Young people have had opportunities to meet with the school governors, their local councillor and members of the local community, to discuss with them how the school is running.

There is a well managed process of admission and discharge, to and from the school. Young people are encouraged to visit the school prior to admission to get to know it. There are also opportunities for young people to change school, if they do not like attending Elemore and this is addressed through the review process. The school has put into place a well thought out individual pathway plan for each young person, to enable them to successfully move into either employment or a suitable educational course after leaving school. Good working relationships have been established with local businesses and colleges by the school, to support young people in the first few months after leaving the school. There are excellent care and placement arrangements in place. These arrangements meet the emotional, social and educational needs of the young people. Care files are well-planned and meet all of the national minimum standards. Parents and agencies are kept well informed of the progress being made by the individual person at the school. Review meetings are well-managed, planned and documented and there is always an input into the meeting from the young person concerned.

The school encourages young people to keep in contact with their family, wherever appropriate. Many of the young people only reside on a very limited number of nights during the week, but the school still ensures that they keep in contact with their family and friends. Records are kept of all contacts made by young people, particularly when there are restrictions in place as to who they may contact.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The residential houses are located in the main building of the school over two floors. All of the bedrooms are personalised by the young people living there and they are fully suitable for purpose. All of the lounges and bathrooms are meeting the needs of the young people living there. Furniture is being well looked after by the young people and both houses are well maintained, clean, free from graffiti, friendly in atmosphere and very welcoming. There are small, well-equipped domestic kitchens in each of the houses, to enable young people to have snacks at night. They also provide supervised opportunities for young people to learn some basic independent living skills, such as cooking or ironing. Young people were very proud of their living accommodation and one young person commented 'that it was better than living at home'. However, Elemore school cannot accept young people with physical disabilities, due to its physical and geographical layout and this is made clear in the school's statement of purpose. Currently, the school is undergoing major refurbishment work to its roof and the refurbishment of its windows and young people commented 'that this had really improved some of the bedrooms as there were no draughts now'.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Elemore School is managing equality and diversity issues well. Young people are being positively encouraged to respect and tolerate the needs of others. The school is actively involving young people in working with the local community, through a number of different community based projects. The school is also continuing to develop close working relationships with other schools throughout this country, as well as in Europe and Africa. Young people spoke positively of their involvement in developing these relationships with young people from so many different backgrounds and cultures.

The school has a statement of purpose and a young person's pamphlet detailing how the school is managed. These documents are given to pupils and their parents prior to their admission to the school. Staffing levels are more than appropriate to meet the needs of the young people living in the residential houses. These staffing levels enable extended day pupils to take a full part in the wide choice of activities on offer at the school each evening. The residential staff team are long established and they have a good mix of experienced and well qualified staff to look after the young people. Members of staff receive regular training opportunities, to enable them to continue to develop their skills and knowledge in a wide range of subjects.

The school has excellent managerial and monitoring systems in place. All of the senior management team are fully involved in the management of the school, but also actively encourage other members of staff to become more involved in contributing to the day to day running of the school. The local authority is ensuring that regular and rigorous unannounced monitoring visits are undertaken at the school by a named visiting officer. A report is produced after every visit and is presented to the local authorities senior management team. The head

teacher and governors of the school also receive a copy of this monthly report for comment and action. The head teacher undertakes an annual review of the performance of the school and provides a report for the governing body.

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):