

The Grange Therapeutic School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Christy Wannop
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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

The Grange School is an residential special school, established in 1976 for up to 80 boys aged between eight and 16 years of age. All the pupils have a statement of special educational need to address their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Many pupils have additional learning difficulties. The school aims to promote the healthy physical and emotional development of all pupils through a balanced, progressive and responsive approach to education, care and therapy. There are currently 11 day boys and 77 pupils in total on the roll of the school. Many boys return home at weekends, though some are cared for at the school for longer periods.

Acorn Care and Education acquired the school in January 2005. Most of the school's facilities are at Knossington, a rural setting in Leicestershire. There are six residential houses, five on or very close to the school campus and one senior house in the nearby town of Oakham. In the village of Knossington are two modern buildings, White Gables and The Spinney, for younger pupils. The Manor, a Victorian cottage, is within school grounds, and Northfields and Southfields in the main school building are for intermediate boys. The Hayne, a large Victorian house, is in nearby Oakham, 4 miles away, and is for key stage 4 boys, with a focus on life skills.

Summary

This announced key inspection looked at all the key standards in each Every Child Matters (ECM) outcome group plus Organisation; and followed up on the six recommendations made at the last inspection in late 2007. The school has taken action to meet five of the six recommendations made last year.

Whilst this provision meets most and exceeds a significant number of National Minimum Standards (NMS) for residential special schools, this inspection has found shortfalls in the area of safe recruitment of staff, lack of staff skills to support complex health needs and documentation for physical intervention. In one house boys do not currently have access to a telephone without permission of staff.

However, the school has many strengths. Children benefit from good communication between boarding staff and educational staff. There are effective links between the school and families to ensure that children in crisis or difficulty are supported with welfare or educational needs. Children seek out and value adult support. Adults and children enjoy good communication and cooperative and respectful relationships. Children have fun and adults too have fun and enjoy their work. Children want to be at the school and adults know that relationships are the key to progress.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The school was asked to improve the rigor of some of its policies relating to how it keeps children safe. The complaints procedure now gives clear guidance to potential complainants on how their complaint will be addressed, however, it is not widely available and there have been no recorded complaints.

Training has been delivered to staff about recording incidents of physical intervention in a consistent way according to policy and procedure. This inspection has identified that whilst generally restraint is properly used, it is not always monitored for effectiveness in line with the behavioural policy and that occasionally recording is incomplete.

Recommendations were made to improve the way that records for sanctions are kept and these are now maintained within a bound and numbered book. The policy on searching children's rooms and possessions is now in line with the NMS. The school now has a safeguarding policy that is based on the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) procedures for the area. The bullying policy is now based on the principle of 'zero tolerance' and children say it is effective.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Some children have health conditions which have required skilled adult assistance or nursing support. Whilst staff have had training in the health needs of these children, and children usually manage their own treatment safely, there have been occasions when experienced staff have been asked to assist by a parent. Staff do not have written authorisation from the prescribing general practitioner (GP) or responsible nurse to carry out nursing tasks for children with complex health needs and well meaning support has the potential for risk.

Children are helped to lead healthy lives through otherwise well-managed health care. Children benefit from excellent activities; there are expansive grounds with fishing pools and woods, and energetic staff to keep them company and encourage healthy enthusiasms. Children enjoy good physical, emotional, and mental health. Arrangements for medication are safe and children get the medication they need. Children live in a healthy environment and their health and intimate care needs are identified and promoted in good health assessments and health promotion plans.

Parents report good communication about their child's needs and generally have a very positive view of health care. One describes this as 'excellent', saying their child 'sleeps well, eats well and exercises well'. Another parent reports they feel their child is 'totally cared for and the staff have all his health needs catered for'.

Children lead healthy lifestyles, learn about sexual health, and about the harmful effects of drug taking and smoking. One parent did raise concerns about the prevalence of smoking and the school is aware and working to reduce the number of boys who do smoke.

Children are provided with a choice of healthy and nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs and which they like. Food is plentiful and of good quality and mealtimes are social occasions. Children are not allowed chocolate or fizzy drinks because staff see a link between such 'junk' foods and poor behaviour. Parents say they are happy with the diet at the school that their children are exposed to new and cross-cultural foods. One reported that their child requested that their family eat a sushi meal.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are put at risk because the school does not have a rigorous system for selection and vetting of all staff. The school's practice does not meet all elements of the NMS and is not in

accordance with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DfES) guidance about Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (January 2007).

Children do have very challenging behaviour. Staff are trained to use physical intervention and there is generally good analysis and review of how physical intervention is used in the school. However, not all incidents of restraint have been recorded, monitored and followed up in accordance with policy and procedure. For example, the child's view is not always recorded and monitoring does not always ensure that there is a full account and review of the proper need for, effectiveness and consequences of the event.

Children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled, but not all houses have a working telephone which children can use without asking for adult permission. Children say they know how to make a complaint if they need to and are confident that adults will sort things out for them. The school has improved policy and procedure for handling complaints from children and parents, but has no experience of resolving any issues for children or their parents through the formal process and the Head reports the record of complaints to be empty. There is evidence that sometimes parents may interpret the informal resolution as not being a proper outcome. However, the majority of parents confirm that communication and feedback from the school are good and the school has appointed a member of staff to develop the relationships and good communication between the child, the school and home.

Children are very confident that staff help immediately when bullying occurs. Staff manage the impact of bullying and children know they can trust adults to protect and help them to develop skills to avoid and challenge bullies. Children want to be at the school and have plenty of freedom in the grounds, however, they do sometimes run off or away. The senior management team are developing and improving their follow-up and learning from incidents when children do go missing, whether for 15 minutes within the school grounds or overnight. Children are protected by prompt action from staff and get a positive response on return.

Children are protected from harm, say they feel safe and have confidence in the adults caring for them. They have security and stability in consistent carers and the nurturing experience of a 'home' after the school day. The school has a calm atmosphere. There are good arrangements for safeguarding children. Staff at all levels are trained by the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and are clear about their roles and responsibilities if there is an allegation or suspicion of abuse. The school's policy has not yet been approved by a LSCB advisor but it is updated and improved using Leicestershire LSCB procedural format. Local procedures are in place in the school and staff have managed safeguarding referrals satisfactorily. Staff talk about their personal commitment to whistle blowing about poor practice of colleagues and children say they feel safe. Parents know that direct work is done with young people to promote their safety. One parent said 'I have every faith in them to care for the physical wellbeing of my child. He is in safe hands'.

The school has been established to teach children who face challenges because of their educational, emotional and behavioural needs and outcomes for children demonstrate that this is a real strength. One parent says that she gets a powerful message about how her child is faring at the school, through his behaviour 'which has shown major maturity and evolution'. Standards of behaviour within the school are good, based on positive relationships and a sense of responsibility to the community of adults and children. Young people learn about the consequences of their behaviour and the emphasis is on developing insight and improving

communication to reduce stress and anger. Children benefit from a staff team who have skills and imagination. Therapists listen and advise; care staff support and enable children to feel cared for and nurtured. Particularly challenging children help to draw up behavioural plans to help to direct staff action and focus children on what they must do to improve. Many parents commented on the transformation in their children's behaviour. 'My child's behaviour in school has been well contained. He is extremely difficult. I have nothing but praise for staff'.

Children live in schools that provide physical safety and security and children say they feel safe. There is a thorough approach to risk assessment and documentation, and staff with these responsibilities are skilled in their roles. Parents talk of their confidence about all safety issues within the school, 'he feels safe and knows he can rely on all matters of safety'. Another parent reported that their child was 'very aware of health and safety and safeguarding issues' and the importance of obeying rules and boundaries.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children attend and enjoy school. They are motivated to achieve and help to set targets for this during close discussions with their individual support workers. They talk about their achievements in small steps on a daily basis and are helped by staff to have a goal and value progress. Whilst one parent has concerns about the educational achievement of her son, most parents are extremely positive about the education. They comment on the good communication and support for their children's learning and behaviour. 'I am kept well informed'. 'My child has made enormous strides educationally' and commented that the reading age had increased extraordinarily.

Children develop confidence and self-esteem through positive relationships amongst the staff team and also through the wealth of opportunities offered by the school, in learning, work experience and leisure. Parents and boys really appreciate the activities, which they describe as excellent. 'The range of extra curricular activities is most impressive' and there are some remarkable activities like fishing in France and fundraising. In surveys other parents say, 'my grandson is really enjoying being at the school and doesn't stop telling me about all the different interests. Before he started the school he wasn't really interested in anything at all'.

Children receive outstanding individual support when they need it. There are plenty of responsive and positive role models amongst the staff team, both male and female, for children. Children who require support because of culture, identity, religious or ethnic needs have the help they need to feel part of the community. They have help with communication, access to skilled therapists on site in group and individual work, and caring teams of support staff who have a total child focus. All children have adults they trust and can relate to and the previous head of care continues to have a role as the school's Independent Listener, available to boys at the end of a phone if they need. Adults are constantly ensuring that each child is recognised as an individual and give them time and attention. Boys say that staff are 'brilliant' and that the school provides 'a safe and fun place to live'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

This is an area of significant strength. There is good coordination and support between the various care teams in education, residence and therapy, and this results in well thought out

care and review of children's needs. Children are encouraged to contribute to society and play their part in the community, through service, work experience, building links with local care homes for adults with disabilities. Boys are out and about in their community, sharing local facilities, such as sports centres and gyms. They develop positive relationships and learn not to bully or discriminate. Young people develop self-confidence and the skills to successfully deal with significant life changes and challenges.

Children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run. This happens in formal forums, such as the school council, but also in developing their own personal goals, and participating in daily small group meetings in each of the residential houses.

Children move in and on from the school in a planned and sensitive way. Staff say they would like to have more information at an earlier stage before children first come to the school and ideally to make home visits. Once children arrive, staff act quickly to assess and document needs and plan to meet these. There are good written individual care plans, linked to the statement of educational needs, behavioural plans, risk assessments and educational reviews. Plans do not always evidence the good proactive work of staff to support children at particular times of stress or challenge, or the support given to staff when they are at risk. The families of boys at the school see the improvements. 'The school has made a big difference in my grandson's life. He is a changed boy. He not only has respect and more patience for myself but for others'.

Children can contact parents and families as they wish, by phone or e-mail and most children return home each weekend. Staff support children sensitively and they also keep in good contact about children's needs. One parent thought that care staff do this particularly well and 'should be commended'. Another parent reports that her child has 'matured phenomenally in the ways he acts, socialises with peers, staff and his family' and most parents feel they are kept well informed about progress and developments.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The school provides a really excellent environment for boys to learn and benefit from a residential education. The house is stately and the grounds provide a wonderful space for boys to have freedom and adventure. The houses are all different, but equally comfortable and warm and welcoming. Boys like their shared bedrooms, feel comfortable in their weekday homes and get the most out of the extensive grounds and fishing pools and space. Staff would like to extend the cottage system for the boys who reside in the two units in the main school building so that they too can get the benefit of living away. Staff would also like to get the large swimming pool back into use. Boys asked for a better playground.

Children are pushed to achieve their full potential and to develop skills for adulthood when they leave at 16. Adults help young men through the transition to independent life outside of the school's protective and supportive environment. Staff encourage them to think about budgeting and earning money for the things they need in life by doing chores around the house and also to develop the skills to keep themselves safe. They have opportunities for work experience and some are actively engaged in the community.

Parents say, 'staff have given an outlook to my grandson's future. He now sees himself having a future and even at his age is definitely planning a future with his own decisions'. Another says her child is starting to learn about financial responsibilities and reports that parents are part of discussions about job options and what children need to achieve to succeed in those areas.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Leadership and management of the school is focussed on the best outcomes for children. The senior staff team monitors the operation of the residential provision and ensures that standards of record keeping are generally good and that children experience stability and a school that runs smoothly. However, management monitoring has failed to identify key issues, such as a failure to safeguard children through proper recruitment procedures, satisfactory recording of physical intervention or ensuring that staff can safely provide for children with complex health care needs. These shortfalls contrast with the otherwise good and outstanding outcomes in the day to day care experienced by children.

There is good information for parents about the school and boys too have their own information about what to expect and about how the school will take care of them. Boys are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the adults.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. There is much good practice to help children to know that their individual needs on the basis of race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, gender, age and religion are valued and the service is able to meet their diverse needs in everyday life in the home. Children are emphatic that the staff will do anything they can to help them.

Children are cared for by a staff team with considerable skills, relevant to their roles in care or education or therapy or behaviour management. The senior management team has worked to recruit a strong and resourceful group of adults who can deliver what children need. Staff are well inducted, trained and supported through supervision of care practice and appraisal of development needs. A significant number of staff have achieved a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People, and further training in equality and diversity is planned. Staff say they 'feel the work is rewarding' and that they feel valued.

There are sufficient adults to care for children, and staffing ratios are adjusted to take account of skills and experience and the particular needs of children at any time, though some say they would like to have more time outside of the school day to do individual work with boys. Teaching and pastoral staff also have input to cover at times of shortage.

They work in partnership with parents, promote contact appropriately and the school has invested in additional staff to develop home school coordination. The majority of parents told Ofsted that staff are willing to talk about issues parents and carers have, and that they feel welcome by the staff response. 'The staff give stability, consistency, a good ear and calm words. Just what my grandson needed. Without the school there would not have been improvement and a sense of a future and hope'.

The senior management team is committed and resourceful and are an active presence in the boys' daily lives, in school and in the residential houses. The school is committed to developing

quality standards for how it supports individual residential students. The proprietor monitors the welfare of the children in the school and the Head makes regular care reports about the residential provision as part of his evaluation of whole school effectiveness. A parent said 'I am hugely impressed with this school. Staff are dedicated, professional, well trained and competent. I have great faith in them; they are doing an admirable task in dealing with some very challenging behaviour'.

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):

- ensure nursing procedures are carried out only on written authorisation of prescribing doctor or responsible nurse in relation to the individual child concerned and by staff authorised and trained to do so (NMS 14.23)
- submit the school's child protection procedures for consideration and comment to the Local Safeguarding Children Board (NMS 5.3)
- ensure that use of physical intervention complies with all elements of NMS 10, including child's view, a review of the effectiveness and consequence of restraint, and that it is consistent with the school's stated policy (NMS 10)
- ensure that there is careful selection and vetting of all staff or adults working with children and that the school complies with all elements of NMS 27 and DfES Guidance: Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education. January 2007 (Appendix 4) (NMS 27)
- ensure children can make and receive telephone calls in private without staff permission. (NMS 3.5)