

Meadows School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Lucy Ansell
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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

Meadows School is situated in Southborough, Kent and is a non-maintained residential special school, owned by Barnardo's Children's Charity. The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and at present looks after 18 boarders and has had a significant increase in the day-pupils. The residential provision offers a separate house for girls, situated in a residential area of Southborough and two houses for boys. Both of these buildings are located within the school's grounds and the girls' house is within a short walking distance of the school, situated very close to the town centre of Tunbridge Wells.

Summary

This was an announced inspection carried out over two days by two inspectors. The school is meeting all of the key National Minimum Standards, and has areas of outstanding practice under Being Healthy, Enjoying and Achieving and Organisation. All outcome groups were inspected. The previous recommendations made were also followed up and all but one had been fully implemented. The school continues to move forward and develop and has many outstanding elements. The school's overall management structure and the strong relationships that exist within the school contribute effectively to the protection and promotion of pupils' welfare.

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 promote the safety of the school's pupils with clear indication of any pathways through the car park and alongside the houses. This had been completed but with further building having just finished this needs to be re-applied. The school was asked to ensure greater communication/monitoring between catering and residential staff. There is now a lead provider who ensures all meals are known in advance, and that the food in the school is different to the units. The Initial partnership meeting minutes now go to the kitchens and this ensures all catering staff are aware of any dietary preferences before the pupil starts at the school. The shift leader now ensure staff sit with young people during meals at the units. The school was asked that a full review was undertaken of the redundancy processes and boarders were kept well informed of the processes, and given appropriate information with regards those staff members who would not be returning for the next term. The full review centred around the human resources processes as it was the first time the school had gone through anything like this. One recommendation was repeated as this had not been fully implemented. This was to ensure the front sheet in the personnel files clearly recorded their name, job title and start date, along with a photograph.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

There is excellent provision at the school for identifying and addressing the health needs of boarding pupils. Individual medical care plans for each boarder are kept securely at all the units. These are comprehensive and clear, and kept under constant review. They include signed parental consent forms for medical treatment and first aid. The school and the units maintains a record of any allergies and the current medication being administered, the pupils' local doctor

and parents give written permission to administer all medication and homely remedies. The staff supports parents to access regular and specialist health care services, and also has close links with the local surgery. The school provides an excellent multi disciplinary approach to ensure the students health outcomes are being met in a multi faceted approach. Behavioural support from the school's counsellor, CAMHS worker and anger management group are crucial to the overall development of the pupils' health and well being. Virtually the entire staff team is first aid trained. Staff training is cascaded down to them on administering medication and ensuring the medication administration record sheets are correctly filled in and their competence regularly checked. The medication policies and procedures are comprehensive. The meals provided by the school's catering team continue to be of a high standard and the school is hoping to reapply for the Healthy Schools Award. The school provides a cooked lunch but breakfast and evening meals are fully prepared and cooked on the boarding units. The school is actively working on again providing healthy snacks at morning break time. Overall the food served is wholesome and nutritious and a variety of choices are offered. In the main, students commented positively on the food and confirm the units and school continues to seek regular feedback from them with regards to menu, personal choices and quality. Favourite foods, allergies and other dietary requirements and preferences are recorded in boarders' files, reviewed and provided for, in practice. The main kitchen as well as the units' kitchens are clean and the areas well equipped and maintained. Snacks and drinks are provided within each residential area after school and the boarders are enabled to be as independent as possible in preparing their own snacks and drinks. All the students spoken to embraced healthy eating and offering a healthy lifestyle was taken into account when looking at activities and choices.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The working practice of the staff team serves to protect the privacy of boarders and clear procedural guidance is implemented to ensure information of a confidential nature is appropriately safeguarded and shared. Boarders are confident their concerns and issues are effectively listened and responded to. They simply tell staff if they are unhappy about anything and are happy that is subsequently dealt with. The complaints form for the boarders to use is child friendly and complaints information for boarders is appropriately displayed around the units. Sound and robust child protection policies and procedures are a particular strength of the school. Concerns are swiftly reported and passed onto relevant external agencies, where appropriate. The school has a designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO), and the systems in place ensure a senior member of staff is always on duty. The level of knowledge on this topic throughout the entire staff team is of an excellent standard and inset training days ensure this topic is covered on a thorough and ongoing basis. Similarly, the topic of bullying receives a high profile. Written literature in the form of posters seen in the units and the subject is also covered in assemblies, PHSE and house meetings. Staff are vigilant in looking for signs and symptoms and take appropriate action when incidents do occur, however the recording of incidents of bullying lacks a robust approach. The procedures for reporting significant events and unauthorised absences are in place and understood, though actual occurrences were very rare. This has changed recently and disruption meetings were held swiftly to ensure this does not become common place again. The behaviour management system is clear and effective. Boarders understand how it works and respond positively to the incentives offered. Staff of all disciplines interact positively and respectfully with the boarders and they, in turn are encouraged to be considerate towards others. The written guidance in place pertaining to the management of challenging behaviours is clear. As a result, staff implement safe boundaries and only impose

sanctions and consequences which are appropriate to the behaviour exhibited. The levels of physical intervention actually used in the school and units is very low. Positive handling plans are in place for those whose behaviour may necessitate the use of positive handling. These plans are further supported with robust risk assessments. The Bursar retains an overall responsibility for health and safety matters, he has taken responsibility for the residential areas falling under this heading. This has resulted in a complete audit of all health and safety matters, including fire, security, premises, risk assessments. Fire records and evacuation practises are up to date, the school has adequate insurance cover, electrical and gas appliances are safe. Boarding areas offer a safe environment: all windows are suitably restricted and hot water temperatures are regulated. The walk ways now clearly indicate the suitable paths. The recruitment policy is sound. The school's recruitment process is robust and serves to ensure thorough vetting. Staff personnel records support this with all required information on the staff files. Currently, personnel files do not have a front sheet detailing the individual's photograph, full name, job title and start date.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Excellent levels of communication between teaching and residential staff ensures a seamless approach is followed between school and boarding. All staff and boarders are familiar with individual targets and much work has been completed over the last year in terms of life skills planning and getting an accredited Diploma. Teachers comment positively on the completion and support for homework. They also say boarders arrive on time and are well prepared for the school day. Appropriate leisure activities are provided. Boarders are particularly positive about their participation in the community and have an abundance of opportunities, including ongoing work experience projects from care services to brick laying to working in a shop. Other examples of regular activities include bowling, cinema, football and drama clubs, horse riding and accessing local colleges. Emphasis is placed upon the boarders taking responsibility for making their own plans for leisure activities. Whilst this clearly encourages independence and personal growth, there are instances whereby some boarders may benefit from a more directive approach. The grounds, sports hall and cage for outside sports and basket ball nets are also accessible during after school hours. Boarders further benefit from having their own unique support needs recognised and met. Care files record such details and show how specific individual support is being delivered. This includes health and medical needs, as well as emotional difficulties such as working towards gaining independence and being more solution focused.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Boarders have a strong voice with regards the day-to-day operation of the school. They believe their views and opinions really matter and say they are effectively listened to. Forums include an active student council and each boarding unit holds weekly meetings, whereby boarders and care staff plan activities and discuss school issues. The overall standard of pupil's behaviour at the school is good. The boarders are treated as individuals and their right to independence and choice is made clear and actively upheld. Sound admission processes include clear input from the Initial Partnership meeting, prior to pupils joining the school. The school liaises effectively with parents and conducts the assessment process of prospective newcomers. Each boarder has a designated key worker who liaises between the school, family and, if required external agencies. The boarders state 'it would be rare they would not go to any member of

care staff if they had a problem'. Staff are very knowledgeable about the care needs of the boarders, the care plans reflect this and hold comprehensive up to date information. The boarding team focus very much upon social skills within their care planning and target setting process. Targets are set in consultation with the boarders and care is taken to ensure they are achievable. Targets are reviewed every term. Regular ongoing contact with parents is maintained using written reports and telephone calls. Key workers call them each week to provide general feedback on progress. There is no internet provision within the boarding units, however clubs are set up at the school for using the IT equipment during lunch times and after school once a week.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Two of the three boarding houses which are on the school site were visited. These are well furnished and decorated to a very high standard, and the communal areas feel homely and lived in. Furniture and fittings are of a good quality and the boarders are consulted with regards to décor. The bedrooms have all been personalised and all have a single bedroom if they choose this. The girls' house is in nearby Southborough and is within walking distance of Tunbridge Wells town centre, this is currently being renovated to bring it up to the same standard as the other houses. The girls are currently housed in other Barnardo's facility not far from the school. Boarders are able to wear their own clothes outside of school time and can obtain personal requisites from a variety of sources; this is actively encouraged as part of budgeting and independence training. Every boarder has their own personal lockable storage facility within their bedroom to protect treasured items.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Clear written policies and procedures underpin the school's practice and there is good information provided for boarders and their parents. Boarders confirm their understanding of key areas such as complaints, bullying and behavioural expectations explained during the introductory period. The young person's handbook is written in a child friendly manner and is clear and easy to read, however this needs revising. This is a school where there is a high level of care and support given to pupils from a competent multidisciplinary team. There is a complete wrap around service for boarding pupils with total integration between the residential and educational staff. There are excellent behaviour management systems in place for pupils with special needs and good contact and support given to families. The school has this year created more opportunities to celebrate the successes of the students and embarked on getting an accredited Diploma for the students to recognise achievements made in independent living. Care files and daily notes are clear and easy to follow. The boarders understand they can read these and are encouraged to make entries if they wish to. Although staffing was an issue at the beginning of last year this has now been resolved and they are fully staffed. All existing staff receive positive handling training, and training on safeguarding and other relevant subjects. All staff have or are working towards achieving the NVQ Level 3 childcare qualifications. Staff rosters ensure sufficient time for supervision, attendance at meetings and for record keeping. Children are looked after by staff who understand their needs, and are able to meet them in a professional and competent manner. Barnardo's continues to supply a Standard 33 visitor, who conducts termly visits, resulting in a written report and she provides additional valuable support and guidance to the Head of Care. The school's senior management team and school governors

continue to monitor and identify any issues requiring action in a timely fashion. All of these factors effectively contribute to a sound and robust monitoring process, which positively impacts upon all of the pupils.

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 the recording processes used for looking at incidents of bullying are robust and comprehensive (NMS 6)
- ensure the front sheet for each member of care staff file has a photo, name and title and start date (NMS 27)
- ensure there is a balance of staff arranged activities for pupils unable to take full responsibility for planning their own (NMS 13)
- ensure the young person's handbook is reviewed and revised (NMS 1)

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.