

Limpsfield Grange School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Lucy Ansell
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Date of last inspection	28 February 2008

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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 school is situated within the residential area of Limpsfield in Oxted, Surrey. According to its prospectus, it is a small Residential Special School catering for girls between the ages of 11 and 16 who would be emotionally, educationally or physically vulnerable in a mainstream setting. The school was built in the 1880's as a family home and still retains many of its original features. The boarding facilities within the school are situated on the first floor and the girls are suitably separated in terms of age groups. The grounds surrounding the school are well maintained, safe and secure. In addition, the school has a tennis court, gymnasium and swimming pool, and an award winning smallholding and gardens that are available to all of the pupils. There are currently 28 girls boarding, some of these on a shared basis for short term boarders as there are only 22 beds.

Summary

This was an announced key inspection carried out over two days by one inspector. The school meets all of the key National Minimum Standards. All outcome groups were inspected, Being Healthy and Enjoying and Achieving were judged as outstanding. The previous recommendations made were also followed up, these had all been addressed, albeit some require continued development. Although the overall structure of the boarding provision remains adapted for the purpose it was clear that the staff had made huge efforts to ensure the facilities, although not ideal, are homely and comfortable and to a good standard. The school under its new management 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 contributes effectively to the protection and promotion of pupils' welfare. The schools major strength is meeting the girl's individual needs and promoting the girls self esteem and confidence.

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 teacher had just taken up her post prior to the last inspection and has used the many recommendations raised as a guide to improving the boarding provision and the life chances for the girls. After much consultation one CAMHS worker will be in post from November. The older girls are planning and providing their own meals now on a regular basis. The complaint's policy has been updated and amendments have been made. The school was asked to reinforce the role of the Independent Listener and this has been adhered to with frequent visits and lots of information about them displayed throughout the school. The new bullying policy includes information on monitoring and reviewing incidents, and they are linked to individual risk assessments. The school behaviour policy has been reviewed after consultation with parents, pupils and governors. The school now has formalised handovers and review meetings between the teaching and boarding teams. In addition to daily care notes being available at morning staff handovers, there are also more opportunities for whole staff and tutor team meetings. All staff have regular professional development meetings which identify training needs. Staff leading recruitment and training have attended the Safer Recruitment course. The admissions criteria and process has been re-written which includes access to residency. New recording pro-formas were created after team discussion to record weekly care plan meetings with

reference to care plan targets; this work is still ongoing. Exploring greater opportunities to equip the girls with independence skills has become a school development priority and is being led by the Acting Head of Care. The school has reviewed the role and function of the student council and consulted with the girls as to its value. Redecoration along with new furniture and change of rooms and functions has helped improved the overall feel of the boarding provision.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Individual medical care plans for each pupil are securely held in the downstairs treatment room. These are comprehensive and clear, and kept under constant review. They contain signed parental consent forms for medical treatment and first aid. The school also maintains a record of any allergies and the current medication being administered. Parents give the school written permission to administer homely remedies, the forms for which are sent home annually to be updated. The entire staff team is first aid trained and the duty rota reflects who is staffing the treatment room. The school is able to support access to regular and specialist health care services alongside the main carers. Whilst staff are competent to administer medication, all staff do not receive annual testing of their competency with administration of medication. Clear 'cross- referencing' systems for the administration of controlled medication is in place. The storage and logging of the medication and the medication administration record sheets demonstrates competent practice. The school ensures a robust safe system is in place for transporting any medications to and from school and home. A female doctor conducts all yearly medicals on a rota basis, and the school has a named female practitioner at the local surgery. Pupils are given the opportunity to talk with her privately if they wish. The meals provided by the school's chef continue to be of an excellent standard and the school is working towards its Healthy Schools status. The food served is wholesome and nutritious and a variety of choices are offered, including excellent vegetarian and gluten free options. The girls commend this provision and confirm the catering manager continues to seek regular feedback from them with regards to menus and quality. Favourite foods, allergies and other dietary requirements and preferences are recorded, reviewed and provided for, in practice. The main kitchen is clean and the area is well equipped and maintained. The catering team is under staffed at present and is working extremely hard to continue to provide an excellent service for the lunch and evening meal. Snacks and drinks are provided within each residential area and the boarders are enabled to be as independent as possible in preparing their own snacks and drinks.

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. The girls know how to make representations and are confident their concerns and issues are effectively listened and responded to. They are now fully conversant with the role of the Independent Listener and the Ofsted inspectorate. The complaints form is child friendly and easy to use. 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 is looking to train senior staff so they have four Designated Child Protection Officers (DCPO), and the systems in place ensure a DCPO 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 and school projects is advertised throughout the school for both the staff team and boarders. Staff are vigilant in looking for signs and symptoms and take appropriate action when incidents do occur. The school now has a designated lead who has revised the policy and school message; and the school is continuing to find ways to improve the current format. The girls reported that they feel safe within the school. A clear procedure exists in terms of reporting notifications. Similarly, the school enjoys a good overall attendance record, with no reportable incidents of absconding within the last year. The behaviour management system has been reviewed and updated and is clear and effective. The girls understand how it works and respond to the positives and incentives offered. Staff of all disciplines interact positively and respectfully with the girls and they notice and report on all behaviour, in turn this encourages the girls to be considerate towards staff and peers. 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. Positive handling plans are in place for those girls whose behaviour may necessitate the use of positive handling. These plans are further supported with robust risk assessments. However, within the recording of sanctions low level ones also need to be recorded and staff are working fully with this. The implementation of sound and robust health and safety policies and procedures serve to protect staff and boarders. Fire safety precautions are rigorously implemented and the girls know the fire evacuation procedures; these are regularly practised. Robust risk assessments of the premises have been completed, however, this has not been completed for the grounds. Monitoring systems are in place for conducting room by room risk assessments, including the risk of fire, these are updated annually. Health and Safety checks have been completed by the site manager. Legionella testing is up to date and the hot water mixer valves are tested every year. The content of the staff files are exemplary. They consistently hold all the relevant paperwork in a clear and concise manner. There is rigorous selection and vetting of staff who work with the boarders; all staff have had enhanced checks through the Criminal Records Bureau. Checks on identity and qualifications have been completed along with full employment histories. Written references are followed up by telephone verification and applicants cannot start work until all of the required paperwork and checks have been completed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The residential team's contribution to education is effective. Close liaisons between teaching staff and the girls' tutor groups ensures a holistic service is provided. Such joined up working positively impacts upon the chances for success and this further enhances feelings of achievement and self esteem for the girls. This is fully recognised as contributing to the enjoyment of educational achievement, by playing set educational games and having set home work times in a conducive setting. Care staff are also proactive during the day giving practical and emotional support to the girls who have difficulties with attendance in class and punctuality to lessons. The girls are actively encouraged to take part in leisure activities both inside the school and in the community, linking with more life skills based courses and work experiences. They are encouraged to try out new activities and interests which they may not otherwise get a chance to try. The parents letters and the girls spoken to clearly stated that 'they enjoy these activities' that 'they appreciate the efforts made by staff'. The school ensures that the girls are actively involved in the planning and consultation of all activities and outings. The school has initiated a programme of independent travel training and life skills with the girls in conjunction

with the youth opportunities fund and they receive a qualification at the end of the course. One of the strengths of a smaller school with smaller groups is that it really enables the girls to receive the individual support both within the education and boarding provision. The school has explicitly identified how support to individual girls will be provided and who will respond to that need. Staff were observed during key working sessions and these addressed a range of subjects including keeping safe, health and emotional well being. The school now has well-established links with a range of helping agencies and the staff make every effort to find services to fit the girls' needs. The notice boards around the school prominently display the outside agencies and services that they can use without needing to refer to staff. The girls say they 'can approach any member of the care staff with a problem, and the friend bean bags mean if some one is sat on them they need a friend to talk to'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Boarders have an opinion and 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 area holds daily meetings, whereby boarders and care staff plan activities and discuss school issues. The school is working on quality assurance systems that will be centred around the experience of the girls. The families of the children say they feel listened to and are consulted regularly for their opinion about things that matter. The school actively promotes inclusion with lots of activities, so the girls can choose what is right for them and some recently assisted with the new staff recruitments. The overall standard of pupil's behaviour at the school is excellent. All admissions to the school are planned and the head teacher has rewritten the admission criteria so now has more control over the admissions to the school. New admissions and their families have been involved in the planning and most girls visit the school before they are placed and have seen the boarding facilities. The school works hard on preparing the girls with the necessary skills and confidence for leaving the school. Each young person has a clear care plan which details how her needs are to be addressed based upon an assessment and detailed risk assessments. The girls are usually helped to complete parts of the plan themselves and it details all targets and key working sessions, however, the girls need to be encouraged to take ownership of all paperwork written about them. Whilst this is a fairly new working document and is still being reshaped and formed, the sections of the care plan are not clearly recognised and the targets lack specific focus. Regular ongoing contact with parents is maintained using written reports/contact books for younger boarders and telephone calls. Key workers call them when required to provide general feedback on progress.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The girls change into their own clothes at the end of the school day and they are able to obtain their personal items for the evening, for example, phones and hand held game consoles. The girls also have their own lockable storage space but many of the younger girls prefer to keep it with the care staff in the office. The accommodation for boarders is situated on the first floor of the main school building. Due to its age, the building was not designed with modern boarding provision in mind. Girls are effectively separated in terms of their age and staff have worked very hard to create a warm and homely environment. The site manager has redecorated a number of areas following consultation with the girls. There are no separate bedrooms; girls share dormitories and these accommodate varying numbers. There is a sufficient number of

toilets and bathrooms, which are cleaned and decorated to a good standard. The junior and senior common rooms have been furnished to ensure maximum comfort and space, and new sofas were just arriving for these rooms. Common rooms are occasionally used during the day to accommodate speech and language therapy sessions. Boarding is full at present and the school is making best use of the space available by sharing a couple of the beds for short term boarders but this is not an ideal situation.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The school has a clear updated statement of its principles and practice in regard to boarding which is available for all stakeholders. It annually updates the pupils handbook and all boarders have a copy. The general school records are efficiently and effectively organised and are maintained to a good standard. The care team has undergone a major restructuring and nearly all staff are now in place. Each care staff member is attached to a year group who form a tutor group and they will stay with that group for their school career where possible. This ensures the boarding provision is staffed by an experienced and competent team who are able to consistently meet the individual needs of the girls. All staff have achieved or are working towards their NVQ Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. Whilst the normal staffing levels ensure adequate cover for the girls boarding, this is not sufficient to meet the needs of the girls who further require one to one support to ensure their safety and that of the other pupils. The staff-training programme includes a good induction. There are plenty of training opportunities for the staff and they have regular professional development meetings which identify training needs. The care staff attend the school's five inset training days or internal training is built into weekly staff meetings. Staff are clear about which manager is responsible for their support. They confirm that they receive supervision and that they feel very well supported by the senior staff. The new head teacher and her deputy have been in post for about a year and the changes they have implemented within the school are not just bearing fruition within the school but also the boarding provision. The acting head of care has made further improvements within the paperwork, monitoring and good practices of boarding care, and the results within a short space of time have been very beneficial for all the girls. The school is centred around the experiences of the girls and how to meet their needs. The staff are actively involved in this process and all recommendations made have resulted in positive action being taken and all staff being involved in the process. The council also 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 Headmistress and acting head of care. 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 all staff receive competency testing around administration of medication (NMS 14)
- provide all girls with the chance to be fully involved with all aspects of monitoring and paperwork (NMS 17)
- ensure a generic risk assessment is completed annually for the outside areas (NMS 26)
- provide an end of year report to show new council members what was achieved and is still outstanding and needs following up on (NMS 2)
- review care plans to include more details of all relevant support and reflect targets that are more achievable (NMS 17)
- ensure normal staffing levels provide adequate cover for the girls boarding, who further require one to one support to ensure their safety and that of the other pupils.(NMS 28)