

Arbour Vale School

Inspection report for residential special school

Unique reference number	SC370928
Inspection date	20 October 2008
Inspector	Brian Mcquoid
Type of Inspection	Key

Address	Arbour Vale School Farnham Road Slough Berkshire SL2 3AE
Telephone number	1753525113
Email	
Registered person	Slough Borough Council
Head of care	Veronica Ellul - Head of Residential Care.
Head / Principal	Debbie Richards - Head Teacher.
Date of last inspection	14 July 2007

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Cripins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

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

Arbour Vale School provides education for pupils who have moderate learning difficulties (MLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD), profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), or have an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The school occupied new premises in September 2007, with a purpose built residential unit located on the site which is able to accommodate 12 pupils. The residential provision became operational during the summer term of 2008 with the number of pupils accessing the provision steadily increasing. The stated aim of the residential provision is to work on specific objectives with pupils who have a diagnosis of ASD, via education programmes, and extended learning opportunities through delivery of a 24 hour curriculum. There is close collaboration between parents/carers, residential staff, and school staff to ensure consistency between environments. Overnight placements are from Monday evening to Friday morning inclusive.

Summary

This inspection was carried out on an announced basis and the school was inspected against all of the key National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools. The school provides an extremely high standard of care for its residential pupils within an environment where they are extremely well protected from harm, where they are valued and treated with respect as individuals, and where they are enabled and supported in achieving positive developments in areas of their lives. The school's residential provision is extremely well managed; there is a consistency of staffing, good relationships with parents, and high staffing levels which ensure the needs of individual pupils are exceedingly well met. The residential staff group at the school are a highly committed and enthusiastic group. They possess significant experience, are extremely knowledgeable, and are very skilled at caring for and working with young people with autism. There are excellent opportunities for training provided, formal and informal support is extremely good, and the staff group operate very effectively as a team. Communication across the school is good, and there are established operational systems which contribute very effectively in protecting and promoting the welfare of pupils. Comprehensive policies and procedures underpin the operation of the residential unit, and these support and encourage good practice. There is close and effective monitoring of the school's residential provision, and the welfare of its pupils. The school's current recruitment procedures, however, do not fully accord with the National Minimum Standards and are not being effectively monitored.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

This is the school's first inspection since the residential provision became operational during the summer term 2008.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Pupils stay in the residential unit for a maximum of four nights a week, and as such parents retain primary responsibility for meeting the routine health needs of their children. A comprehensive assessment process ensures all relevant information is gained on pupils prior to them commencing overnight stays, and there is very good provision for addressing pupils'

specific health needs. All residential staff have received training in first aid, and the emergency procedures for dealing with pupils who have epilepsy. There is close monitoring at all times of pupils with specific health needs and individual protocols for carrying out emergency procedures are in place. All pupils are subject to regular developmental checks and annual health assessments within the school's provision for health care. Comprehensive policies and procedures which provide suitable safeguards for the welfare of pupils are in place for the management and administration of medication, and all staff undertake relevant training in this area. Records of medication administered are maintained as required and the school obtains written parental permission in relation to medication administration as part of the admissions process. There is a qualified first aid member on duty at all times. Pupils benefit from being provided with meals which are varied and nutritious. They are suitably encouraged to eat a healthy diet, with healthy snacks and fruit freely available within the residential unit. Water bottles are provided for all pupils, regular drinks are encouraged and special dietary needs are well catered for. Staff are suitably trained in food handling and hygiene; pupils are able to access the unit's kitchen and are encouraged and supported in the preparation of meals, and making things for themselves. The school achieved Healthy Schools Status in June 2007.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The school provides an environment for residential pupils within which they are extremely well protected from harm. Pupils are cared for as individuals and their privacy and dignity is appropriately respected at all times by staff who are acutely aware of, and sensitive to their needs. Suitable policies and procedures underpin good practice within the residential setting and staff receive appropriate training relating to the personal care of pupils. All pupils have single bedrooms where they are able to spend private time if they wish and all bathroom and toilet facilities afford appropriate privacy. All confidential information is appropriately stored. The school has an appropriate complaints procedure which is made available to parents and placing authorities. Staff possess an intimate knowledge of pupils and how they communicate, and employ a variety of communication techniques, including social stories, to ascertain how they are feeling. Staff are also acutely aware of their responsibility to advocate for pupils. There have been no complaints received since the opening of the residential provision. The school has very good relationships with parents and placing authorities, and deals very effectively with minor concerns at an early stage. Staff possess a sound understanding of the school's child protection procedures and their responsibility to protect pupils from harm. All staff receive child protection training as part of their induction. There is an open culture within the residential provision whereby good practice is shared and where staff would challenge anything untoward that they witnessed. Pupils are extremely well protected from any form of abuse. Pupils are very well protected against bullying type behaviours by excellent staffing ratios, and by staff who are skilled at working with young people who display behaviours which may present a risk to others. Detailed risk assessments are maintained for all pupils and individual plans identify strategies to manage and develop their behaviour in a positive manner. A positive approach to behaviour is adopted with pupils which uses rewards and where they are routinely praised for positive behaviour. Possible functions of behaviour are considered, social stories are regularly used, and guidelines for individuals identify pro-active and reactive strategies for each pupil. Staff are also trained in Team Teach, an approach to behaviour management which includes the use of physical interventions, but which emphasises and teaches de-escalation techniques. Detailed records are maintained of incidents, sanctions, and physical interventions, all of which are closely monitored by the residential manager. There is a positive culture within the residential

setting where pupils are enabled and supported in achieving positive outcomes in relation to their behaviour. The school makes excellent provision for the physical safety of its residential pupils. The residential unit provides a suitably secure environment with restricted access, and the school site has excellent security arrangements. A comprehensive health and safety policy is in operation; staff receive associated training and are suitably aware of their responsibilities in relation to maintaining a safe environment. Fire safety arrangements are comprehensive with up to date fire risk assessments in place and in house and external checks and tests being carried out as required with appropriate records kept. Identified risks to pupils are extremely well managed and detailed risk assessments provide excellent protection for them in relation to their behaviour, the premises, and any activities they undertake, both on and off site. The school's recruitment procedures include provision for undertaking enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks on all staff and for requesting references. The procedures do not, however, accord fully with the National Minimum Standards and are not being effectively monitored.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Residential staff routinely prepare and accompany pupils to school each morning, and back to the residential unit after school has ended. There is good communication with education staff on a daily basis and pupils' statements of special educational need, annual review reports, and individual education plans (IEPs) are accessible within the residential unit. Individual care targets are directly linked to pupils' IEPs, and the school is planning to further develop collaborative planning between residential and educational staff in relation to the process of target setting for residential pupils. There is good access within the residential setting to computers, books, art and craft materials, games, toys, TV and video, which can all be used to support pupils' education outside of the school day. High levels of staffing within the residential setting provide excellent support according to individual pupils' needs. Detailed plans are in place to address all aspects of identified need and these are implemented successfully by a skilled and well trained staff group who know all the pupils extremely well. Pupils have been extremely well supported in making the transition to residential life, and a number are already showing signs of making positive developments in areas of their lives.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

There is good provision at the school for consulting with pupils and for maximising their ability to be independent. Pupils are encouraged and supported to make decisions wherever possible in their daily lives, and this is reflected in their care plans and individual targets. Staff possess a detailed knowledge of the pupils they care for and are acutely aware of how they communicate. This enables them to facilitate pupils in making choices in areas such as the food they eat, the clothes they wear, the toiletries they use, activities they enjoy doing, and the staff who work with them. Staff use a variety of methods to communicate with pupils, and support them in making choices and to contribute to decision making. These include signing, symbols, PECS (picture exchange communication system), verbal communication, objects of reference, gestures and prompts. The school works closely with parents; there is regular communication, parents are kept suitably informed, and they are able to contribute to the decision making process affecting their child. The school is extremely experienced in preparing and supporting young people to make transitions in their lives. This now includes the transition to boarding for some pupils, and records show how this has been successfully achieved with the current residential

group. Introduction to the residential unit is a gradual process which is sensitive to the needs of both pupils and parents, and which enables pupils and staff time to get to know one another. Comprehensive assessment procedures ensure sufficient information is gathered prior to a young person being admitted to the residential provision. Pupils will only stay in the residential provision until 16 years of age, and so staff will not routinely be involved in the transition process for pupils when leaving the school at 19 years of age. The school has established procedures for gathering relevant information and conducting assessments of prospective residential pupils. The process is thorough and provides comprehensive information relating to all aspects of need which is then used to inform the initial care planning process. Plans for individual pupils are well written documents which clearly identify their needs in a particular area, and detail how that need is to be addressed. There is very close monitoring of pupils' individual plans within the residential setting and records clearly indicate the progress they are making. The school has good relationships with the parents of residential pupils, and records show regular communication takes place. This includes telephone calls and the use of photographic diaries to show parents what their child has been doing during their stay. Telephone facilities are available within the residential unit, and one pupil regularly telephones their parents. Parents are kept suitably informed of matters concerning their child, and are fully involved in decision making.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils at the school benefit from outstanding residential facilities that have been purpose built, and which at the time of the inspection had been in operation for less than two terms since new. The residential unit provides a safe physical environment, and one which is spacious and extremely well suited to meet the needs of pupils. All pupils are provided with single bedrooms which are able to be personalised accordingly; bathroom and toilet facilities provide appropriate levels of privacy, and have specialist adaptations for use with some pupils. There are two lounge areas, a communal dining area, large kitchen and laundry facilities, a sensory room, an IT room, a large multi purpose recreational room, and large garden area. All of the facilities within the residential unit are accessible by pupils, subject to individual risk assessments, and all contribute to providing an environment which is ideally suited to meet the needs of the pupils accommodated.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Pupils at the school benefit from residential provision that operates efficiently and is extremely well organised and managed. There is good information provided for parents and placing authorities which is up to date, which accurately reflects the service provided, and which is linked to the 'Every Child Matters' agenda. Pupils are introduced to the residential provision in a manner sensitive to their needs and are provided with information in an accessible format. The school's staffing arrangements, both day and night, are excellent and ensure the welfare of pupils is extremely well protected and promoted. Staffing levels are sufficient to provide appropriate supervision both on and off site, to support individual pupils, and to enable staff to work with individual pupils on identified targets contained within their care plans. Pupils benefit significantly from a continuity of care provided by a committed staff team, and where arrangements to cover sickness and absence are not disruptive to this process. The school provides excellent support for its residential staff group who operate extremely effectively as

a team. They all have job descriptions which accurately reflect their roles, there are clear lines of accountability, they receive formal supervision as required, are subject to annual appraisal, and have personal development plans in place. Staff meetings take place regularly, and there is excellent support provided by the residential manager and the school's Head. Within these support mechanisms, staff are successfully able to reflect on and evaluate work carried out with individual pupils. The school's residential provision is organised, managed, and staffed in a manner that delivers a very high standard of care. The staff team are enthusiastic, well trained, and clearly committed to their work with pupils. The residential manager and deputy are suitably qualified, and are extremely well supported by the school's Head. Training for staff is a high priority and excellent provision is made for this. All staff undertake a comprehensive induction which prepares them extremely well for their work with pupils; ongoing and refresher training is provided, and includes all staff being trained to the National Vocational Qualification Level 3 standard. There are clear and effective systems in place which provide for effective internal and external monitoring of the residential provision, its overall operation, and the welfare of individual pupils. There is, however, no effective monitoring of recruitment procedures.

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
----------	--------	----------

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that recruitment procedures accord fully with the National Minimum Standards, and are effectively monitored. (NMS 27.2)

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.