

King's Mill School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Simon Morley
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Date of last inspection	11 October 2007

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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

East Riding of Yorkshire Council own King's Mill School, which provides education for over 70 children with a range of learning disabilities and autism. King's Mill is a special school and all children who attend have a statement of educational need. The school accepts children from the age of five up to 16 and there is also a nursery provision for children with special needs.

The school has a separate residence on site for the five to 16 year old age group. This is a two story building accommodating a maximum of 16 children. Upstairs there are six double and two single bedrooms, two bathrooms, a shower room, games room and staff bedrooms. Downstairs there are two more single bedrooms for children with physical disabilities, bathroom, toilets, two more play rooms, computer room and dining room. There are a variety of outside play areas and some parking for visitors.

Children stay at the residence for short breaks of one or two nights per week on a regular basis. Some children also stay at weekends and for part of the school holidays.

Summary

This was an announced inspection covering all the outcome areas and checked for compliance with good practice recommendations made at the last inspection.

There has been good investment in improving the physical quality of the residence and the majority of good practice recommendations have been met.

There are good arrangements to ensure the health and safety of children are promoted and protected. Support for them to enjoy and achieve is outstanding. The school is well managed, children are included and have a say in their lives and running of the school. There are strong links with the local community that helps provide children with a range of additional life experiences. The school is limited by its size and range of facilities it has to offer.

As a result of this inspection several further good practice recommendations have been made.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There has been substantial investment in improving the physical quality of the residence. This includes new windows, front door, fully functional bathroom for children with physical disabilities and new outdoor play areas. This provides a much better and safer quality of life for children using the residence. There is still no access to the upstairs facilities for children who use wheelchairs.

Staff supervision has improved helping to ensure the high quality of care though internal monitoring and reports to governors still fall short of the required standard.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children receive good health care and health education. There are good arrangements to ensure their health and welfare is promoted and protected.

Children learn about health and personal care issues and are involved in a competition staging a drama production about health promotion. The children are excited about this and looking forward to being on stage. Children are aware of healthy lifestyles and the school has won awards for having a healthy environment and children's health promotion.

Records are kept of children's health needs and staff provide good physical and emotional support. Whilst parents retain full responsibility for their children's health care they are also well supported by the school and find this very helpful.

Arrangements for children getting their medication safely are satisfactory. There are potential risks to children's health as medication procedures are not clear, safe and consistently followed. The school lacks a clear policy and written guidance for administering and storing medication.

Children are well fed at school. They have plenty to eat and meals are balanced, wholesome and nutritious. Children like the food and are provided with regular drinks and healthy snacks.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children like staying at the school it is fun, safe and they are well cared for. Staff are friendly and approachable. Children feel able to talk to them about any concerns and know how to complain. Staff are open to their children's concerns and respond sensitively and professionally. There is frequent contact with parents who also feel comfortable approaching the school. There is a clear complaints procedure that is readily available to children and their parents.

Children are generally seen and treated as individuals and their privacy and dignity is respected. Sometimes this is not the case and care practice compromises children's privacy and dignity.

The school has a very clear procedure for responding to child protection concerns which is known to staff who have regular training about this subject. Children are provided with guidance about personal safety as part of the school curriculum and by care staff. This has helped children be able to travel independently and be safe cyclists.

Children have also been involved in developing the school's anti-bullying codes and confirm that there are very low levels of bullying within the school and staff help keep them safe. There is a warm welcoming and friendly atmosphere in the school.

There is no history of children being missing from the school. Staff are aware of what action to take to keep children safe should this occur.

Children's behaviour is very good and there is little poor behaviour for staff to manage. Staff respond in a number of ways which may mean a child loses a privilege, or has some time out to calm down. The ethos is to reward positive behaviour and staff see the children and young people in a very positive way. As a result the use of sanctions is limited. Physical intervention by staff when children are challenging is very rare. Sanctions are recorded and monitored to ensure they are being used appropriately. Any use of physical intervention is similarly recorded.

There is very good risk management and a range of risk assessments about the safety of the school, fire, children and young people's behaviour, activities and trips out. These assessments are taken into account and risks well managed in supporting children to develop their independence and potential. The school is kept safe and well maintained.

Staff recruitment processes are generally thorough to ensure only suitable staff work in the school. Some required records were not available to demonstrate the school's recruitment meets minimum standards.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children receive outstanding support so that they enjoy their time at school and achieve excellent educational progress.

Children, parents, governors and staff all have very high views of the school and the care of children. Children think the school is great fun, that staff are very kind and helpful and they really enjoy the activities. All parents asked said that the school is welcoming, has high standards and meets children's needs.

For children who use it the residence is an essential part of school life. It provides great opportunities for further personal, social and educational development whilst being a fun place to stay and spend time with friends.

Staff are caring and sensitive and support children well with a range of personal care needs and different methods of communication. There is a strong inclusive ethos and excellent links with the local community. This ensures all children have opportunities to be involved in school projects and activities. They also benefit from being able to access local amenities, take part in work experience, use local transport to travel independently and have support from other local schools.

Through the schools various fundraising activities and projects children have been supported to attend meetings, conferences and be on television. Not only has this helped raise the profile of the school and level of local support, it also provides children with excellent educational experiences and is a boost to their esteem.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

There is good support for children to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run. The school values children's views, as well as running their own quality assurance surveys the school has also commissioned independent consultation with children. There is very good practice of holding person centred reviews to support children making decisions about their care, education and future.

There is some assessment and planning of children's needs and feedback from children and parents is very positive about how their care needs are met. However the school's written plans describing how children's care needs will be met are not fully comprehensive and fall short of what is required. This may result in some care needs of children being overlooked.

Children are part of the school council and their views about fundraising activities and school improvements are respected and acted on. Children are elected by their peers and have a good influence on the way the school is run through the council. Latest improvements include the design and build of the new outdoor play areas.

Admissions to staying in the residence are sensitive and planned to make sure children feel safe and comfortable. Children have excellent relationships with staff who are friendly, supportive and caring, helping to make children's stays a very enjoyable experience. Children look forward to staying at the school, part of the attraction is to spend time and socialise with their friends. They are able to contact their parents by telephone when they stay and parents are welcome to visit. The school also provides an excellent supportive liaison role for parents, enhancing the holistic care and education of children.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

There has been substantial improvements to the physical environment. New windows, tinted glass and black out curtains helps children sleep better in draught free rooms. The new front door has added security from unwanted intrusion. There are safer, better outside play areas that children have helped to design. There is a new fully functional downstairs bathroom for children with physical disabilities.

Overall, the residence is much more fit for purpose, though still on the small side and lacking a good range of space and facilities. The school have not yet been able to address the issue of access to the upstairs facilities for wheelchair users. This means that some children do not get to stay at the residence when they want to with their friends and have to stay with a younger age group.

Children get support to develop their independence skills and potential. This is facilitated well with plenty of opportunities during the daily life at school and is balanced with children's needs and risks to safety. Parents are also supported to plan ahead in time regarding their children's future when they leave school

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is very good clear information about the school and what it provides. This is child friendly and there is a guide for parents.

The school is well staffed, there is low turnover giving children good continuous care from people who know them well. This is further enhanced by the very good range of staff experience and access to a wide range of training. Staff are also encouraged to achieve the desired qualification in caring for children and young people. Staff receive regular supervision and support from their managers to ensure children's care is of high quality. Staff records did not include up to date training records which makes it hard to plan for and assess staff training needs.

There is a well qualified and experienced management team who are committed to continuous improvement and bringing best practice into the school. There are some well developed quality monitoring systems based on feedback from children and parents to avoid institutional practices.

This is let down by the internal monitoring and reports to governors which fall short of the required standard. This system lacks accountability and does not thoroughly ensure the health and welfare of children are effectively monitored.

The promotion of equality and diversity in the school is good. Children are taught to be tolerant and learn about other races and cultures. They also receive high quality care based on their individual needs and there are good opportunities for everyone to be included in projects and the school council. The school has very good links with the local community and children benefit from the wider experiences this offers.

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 there is a policy and written guidance, implemented in practice for administering and storing medication (NMS 14.17)
- ensure that at all times children's privacy and dignity is respected (NMS 3)
- ensure the school's recruitment process is verifiable in records held at the school including those records listed in NMS 27.2
- ensure that children with disabilities have access to all parts of the building they need to use (NMS 23)
- ensure that half-termly monitoring visits comply with the requirements of NMS 33.