

Unsted Park School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	John Chivers
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Date of last inspection	18 March 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

Unsted Park is a new residential special school that provides day and residential provision to children and young people with Asperger's Syndrome. The school premises are a Grade II listed building in a country setting with large grounds. A sports court and a swimming pool are available. The school provides 11 residential placements in two boarding units; four bedrooms are available in one unit and seven bedrooms are available in one unit. These are located on the first floor. Access to the boarding areas is separate from the school via a pedestrian walkway, away from vehicles accessing the grounds. A controlled access lift is available, and access to the boarding areas is managed by a key card entry system. All bedrooms are single occupancy; twelve bedrooms are en suite with a bath or shower and WC, five bedrooms have access to a dedicated bathroom or shower room next to the room. A range of communal areas are available and include lounges, quiet rooms and therapy rooms. Parking is available away from the main building. The school provides a caring and supportive service to children with special needs.

Summary

The inspection was a 'key' inspection and announced. All of the key standards in the sections Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoying and Achieving, Positive Contribution, Economic Wellbeing and Organisation of the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools were assessed on this occasion. The boarding section of the school is organised and managed to a high professional standard and affords an equal standard of care and support to the students, having full regard for equality and diversity issues in all areas of its operation.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the manager was asked to ensure the school's privacy and confidentiality policy and anti bullying procedures are expanded to cover all details as required by the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools, obtain a controlled drugs book and increase the frequency of fire evacuation drills.

All of the recommendations have now been addressed which will now give staff clearer guidance regarding policies and procedures, ensure that controlled drugs are recorded appropriately and reinforce the school's fire protection arrangements to staff and students.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The school has full regard for health and medical matters concerning the students and ensures such areas are diligently monitored and reviewed as appropriate. The school's catering arrangements allow for healthy eating with the provision of a balanced and nutritious diet and meals prepared to a high standard.

The school has a wide range of policies and procedures regarding health and medical matters. The policies and procedures are prepared to a high standard and give clear instructions and guidance to staff. There are comprehensive health and medical histories held on students' individual files. Most of the information is supplied by parents and is updated by staff as

appropriate. There are clear and detailed health care plans in place which evidence regular monitoring and review. Risk assessments regarding student's health care arrangements are also held. Students retain the services of their own General Practitioner; however a local doctor is available to the school in case of emergencies. Parental consent forms regarding medical treatment are in evidence. The school liaises with a range of health care professionals including psychologist, nutritionist, speech and language therapist, occupational therapist and other relevant specialists. Students medication administration records show clear and accurate recording and are signed by two staff following dispensing. The same arrangements are in place regarding the administration of controlled drugs which are held within a double locked facility. Other medication is also stored in locked cabinets and medication checks and audits take place regularly. A refrigerator is also available to store appropriate medication. All staff have received current training in the administration of medication and ten staff are trained in first aid which allows for trained first aider to be available on each duty shift. Accidents are clearly recorded and such recording is consistent with the requirements of the Data Protection Act. Students are taught about healthy living and lifestyles via the school's curriculum and these areas are reinforced by care staff in boarding time via discussion and advice and the opportunity to engage in physical activities. There are a range of health related posters and information displayed around the school for students' attention.

The school's menu provides for a balanced and healthy diet and has an input by a nutritionist and the students themselves. Medical, cultural, religious and preferential diets are catered for as appropriate and food theme nights associated with other nationalities and cultures are held. Meals are of high quality, plentiful, well presented and are thoroughly enjoyed by students and staff. The school has a healthy eating award and closely follows appropriate guidance in this area. Students may shop for provisions and a student cooking night is held each Thursday, which helps them develop independence skills and knowledge in this area. The kitchen area is large, well equipped and standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high throughout. All catering staff are trained in food hygiene. Provisions are safely and correctly stored and freezers and refrigerators are kept at the required temperatures which are recorded.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The school has detailed policies and procedures regarding privacy and confidentiality and staff sign a confidentiality contract as part of the school's code of conduct. Students have appropriate degrees of autonomy and privacy consistent with their age, level of development and agreed risk assessments. Confidential information is securely held in locked cabinets within locked offices and students have lockable facilities in their rooms in which to keep valued and treasured possessions. Students may also lock their bedroom doors should they wish to do so. Toilet and bathing facilities afford good privacy and a pay telephone is available for students use without reference to staff, though most have cell phones. Students said that staff have regard for their privacy and dignity and always treat them with respect.

The school's complaint procedure is available. There is also a descriptive pictorial version of the procedure for the students which lists the contact details of a number of individuals and agencies should students wish to refer a complaint externally. The school's complaint procedure is reinforced to staff at team meetings and training sessions. The school's complaint book is available and shows that two complaints have been received since the last inspection. Recording is clear and evidences thorough investigation, action taken and an outcome. Students said they

have no complaints about the school, some stating 'It's the best school I've ever been in'. Parents also raise no complaints or concerns via questionnaires and openly praise the school and staff for the excellent quality of care and support the school provides. The school takes any complaint seriously, investigates any issues thoroughly and allows students, parents and others unrestricted access to the relevant procedures.

The school has comprehensive child protection policies and procedures in place and a wide range of other safeguarding guidance and information is available. Staff are clear regarding the procedures and where they can be accessed. There is also a staff whistle blowing policy of which staff are aware. The school undertakes a monthly audit of its child protection and safeguarding arrangements which quickly identifies any areas for update or review. The head of care is the designated Child Protection Liaison Officer 'CPLO' and has attended the Surrey County Council Multi Agency Safeguarding training and all staff have recently received training in child protection and safeguarding. Any child protection or safeguarding issues are promptly actioned, records kept and appropriate notifications made. The head of care said there are no current child protection issues at the school. Students are taught about aspects of personal safety as part of the school curriculum and such areas are reinforced by care staff in boarding time. The supervision of students is close without being intrusive and staff have full regard for students' safety and wellbeing. Students said they feel safe and very well cared for in the school and this is also the view parents express via questionnaires. The school's arrangements in this area are robustly sound and help minimise any potential risks and exposure to students.

The school has an anti bullying policy and procedure and a range of anti bullying information is displayed around the school. Any bullying incidents are recorded in detail and swift and appropriate action taken providing support to the victim and perpetrator alike. Staff receive training in anti bullying and are prompt to challenge such conduct. The head of care said there are no current significant bullying issues in the school and this is reflected by students and parents via questionnaires. Students also said in discussion that bullying is not an issue and that staff deal with any issues effectively. The school recently held an anti-bullying week which reinforced the inappropriateness of such behaviour. No bullying or intimidating behaviour among the students is evident. The supervision arrangements and homely and friendly atmosphere at the school help reduce the likelihood of bullying occurring and encourages cohesion within the student group.

There are clear procedures in place regarding students who are absent without authority. The school's absconding log shows some entries since the last inspection; however most of these are regarding 'bound breaking' by day students and a small number of boarders rather than absconding, and occur mostly out of boarding time.

The school has a comprehensive behaviour management policy and procedure and follows the 'Team Teach' behaviour management programme which is a recognised and approved method of behaviour management in residential special schools and children's residential care settings. All staff are trained in team teach methods of behaviour management which includes the use of physical intervention and restraint. Each student has a behaviour management plan which is detailed and shows evidence of regular monitoring and review. Behavioural targets are also set and a merit award system is in place. Students are able to monitor their own progress via the 'Merit Award Tree' which is displayed in each boarding house. Each student also has a comprehensive written risk assessment regarding their behaviour management. The school has a system of rewards whereby certain items can be purchased via the merit award catalogue.

Students are clear regarding what is expected of them and what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Students said that the standards of discipline and behavioural expectations are fair and realistic and that they have a clear understanding of the behaviour management programme. Sanctions and restraint records are available. All usage appears appropriate and necessary in the circumstances described in the records which are clear, detailed and show that only permissible measures are used. Students respond well to staff requests and instructions and openly state that they appreciate staff inputs, guidance and direction regarding their behaviour management. Relationships between staff and students are very positive with much evidence of good communication, mutual trust and respect and a strong sense of community spirit. Staff engage and interact with students appropriately with good humour evident. Currently all of the students are within the school's remit in terms of behaviour management and control and no significant issues in these areas are evident. The school demonstrates measurable success regarding students' behaviour management via a range of monitoring systems and the standard of conduct in evidence during boarding time. Parents are also of the opinion that staff manage students' behaviour very effectively and their appreciation of this is clearly stated in questionnaires received by Ofsted.

The school has a health and safety policy and procedure and the health and safety 'law' poster is prominently displayed. There is a current fire risk assessment and fire instruction notices are displayed. Fire evacuation drills and fire alarm tests occur on a regular basis and fire systems and fire extinguisher checks are current. All staff are trained in fire awareness. The school receives a full health and safety audit every six months and further checks are carried out by school staff. There are current utility safety test certificates regarding gas, mains electricity, portable electrical appliances, Legionella and asbestos testing. There are a wide range of comprehensive generic risk assessments which evidence regular monitoring and review. School vehicle checks occur each week and all required driving and vehicle documentation is available. Standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high throughout the school and no safety hazards are evident in the areas of the premises accessed. The school takes positive steps to keep students, staff and visitors safe from the inherent risk of fire and other potential safety hazards.

The school has a staff recruitment policy and procedure which has full regard for equal opportunity and diversity in its process and operation. The school's recruitment and vetting procedures are robust and sound with staff personnel files evidencing all required information including two written references and Criminal Record Bureau checks at enhanced level. The school's recruitment and vetting procedures help ensure that only suitable staff are employed to look after the students.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The boarding section has the highest regard for encouraging and enabling students' education and learning and has further sound regard for equality and diversity within the teaching and boarding experience. Pastoral care is of an excellent standard and is provided by a committed and very competent staff team who have knowledge and understanding of students' conditions and individual needs.

There is an excellent contribution by care staff into students' education and learning. There is encouragement and support in sedentary pastimes, physical activities. The boarding section has a range of books, games and play and learning materials which have regard for positive

ethnic images and diversity of cultures and traditions. There is an excellent standard of communication and liaison between care staff and teaching staff with both professions attending handover meetings which evidence full information exchange on individual students, events and issues. Care staff also work along teaching staff in classrooms. School assemblies are a strong feature in developing a sense of community spirit and are used as an opportunity to recognise and celebrate individual and group achievements. Assemblies may also be themed to enable students to learn about other nationalities, cultures and traditions. Assemblies are professionally lead by staff who demonstrate confidence, enthusiasm and knowledge of subjects, enabling students to contribute by using words they have learned in other languages. There is a clear regard for equality and diversity within the school's curriculum which is reinforced by care staff during boarding time. Cultural theme nights are also held taking into account Chinese, Spanish, French and Polish traditions and ways of life. There is a comprehensive life skills programme and a cookery night where students learn a range of skills and competencies which will help equip them for independence in later life.

Students have individual key workers who undertake a range of duties specific to their allocated students. In addition key workers are also delegated a range of specialist tasks and areas of responsibility allocated by the head of care. Key workers meet with their allocated students on a regular basis and key worker reports on such meetings and students' individual logs are available, which have an emphasis on the five outcome areas of 'Every Child Matters'. In addition to the close professional support provided by care staff, a range of external specialists are available to the school when necessary. Students said they appreciate the inputs made by staff and many state they enjoy the boarding experience at the school. Parents praise the high level of care and support afforded to the students. Students' progress is closely monitored and recorded. Care plans are prepared to a high standard and each student has a comprehensive risk assessment. There is also a comprehensive life skills training programme which students said they fully enjoy participating in.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The school facilitates an excellent range of forums to enable students to convey their view and opinions and further ensures a strict admission criteria that only suitable students are enrolled in the school. There are comprehensive social and life skills programmes in place and statements of special educational needs and individual education plans are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis

Students are consulted regarding their views, opinions and choices via a range of forums which include one to one discussion with staff, the student council and boarding house student meetings. Written minutes of such meetings are available which evidence agendas, items discussed and actions and outcomes. Students take the boarding house minutes on a roster basis. Students confirm they are afforded choice and their views and opinions are sought by staff regarding aspects of their daily lives. Students make a contribution to their annual reviews and can attend them if they wish to do so.

Students have comprehensive assessments prior to admission and 'Statements of Special Educational Needs' are held which evidence monitoring and consistent review. There are comprehensive 'Individual Education Plans' which are monitored and reviewed to the same scrutiny and frequency. There are very detailed care plans which cover a range of areas and

also include targets in individual areas. There are also a number of other monitoring and tracking systems in place in order to ensure all aspects of students' welfare, progress and issues are covered.

The school has a clear admissions criteria which is strictly followed in order to ensure only suitable students are admitted. The admissions process includes undertaking a comprehensive assessment including a visit to the prospective student's home by the head of care, head of education and a senior administrator. Short visits to the school then occur followed by admission and a three month trial period. Currently all of the students are within the school's remit regarding individual suitability. The school has a comprehensive social and life skills and citizenship programme which helps equip students for future life. Such programmes are also monitored and reviewed as appropriate. There is a 'transition' programme and students may attend nearby colleges or have work experience placements locally. The head of care said the school has developed a good relationship with some local employers.

There is ample private space available for students to meet with appropriate visitors in private. Any contact that students have with parents, relatives and significant others is recorded. Parents said they are content with the school's arrangements for enabling contact and the helpful, friendly and welcoming disposition of staff.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Students dress on age/fashion appropriate clothes and are well presented. Students have a range of personal requisites which are supplied by parents. Parents also supply students pocket money which is held by staff for safekeeping. Pocket money records are accurately kept and the cash held balanced with the amount entered in the record book.

The school does not prepare students for leaving care; however there are comprehensive social and life skills programmes and transition plans in place for appropriate students.

The boarding houses provide sufficient communal and private space to meet the needs of the students. Communal areas are decorated and furnished to a high standard, are bright, cheerful and provide a homely and comfortable environment for the students. All communal areas are well maintained by staff and students. All students have en suite bedrooms which are also decorated and furnished to a high standard and personalised to varying degrees by the students. Toilet and bathing facilities are of a high standard and afford good privacy. Students said they appreciate the excellent quality of their environment and this view is also reflected by parents in questionnaires.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Full regard for these areas are demonstrated in all aspects of the school's provision including learning about other cultures, nationalities and religions and minority groups. This is further reinforced by staff commitment, awareness and positive attitudes to such issues. The boarding section of the school is organised and managed to a high professional standard and affords an equal standard of care and support to the students. The excellent standard of the boarding sections policies, procedures and

monitoring systems further ensure that staff are provided with clear information about the school's operation and practices.

The school's prospectus is attractive and informative and provides detailed information on the service and facilities provided. There is also a residential handbook 'Introduction to Residential Services' which covers a wide range of areas regarding the boarding provision. There is also a separate handbook for agencies which have contact with the school.

The staff duty roster is available which gives clear details regarding staff on duty and duty times worked. Currently the boarding section has 11 staff inclusive of the head of boarding. Night time staffing arrangements include one waking night member of staff and two sleep in staff. There is also a senior member of staff on call each evening. The staff team have a good balance in terms of gender. The head of care holds the Diploma in Social Work and is a qualified National Vocational Qualification 'NVQ' assessor. All care staff either have or are currently undertaking the NVQ qualification at level 3. The senior staff have a substantial experience of working with students with special needs and closely supervise the less experienced members of the team. The staff team are committed, enthusiastic, professional and competent and the combination of their skills, experience and abilities enable the boarding section to effectively meet the needs of the students and further enable the school to achieve its aims and objectives. Staff are supportive of the school's management and ethos and are clear that all aspects of the service have full regard for equal opportunities and equality and diversity issues and that no discriminatory attitudes or practices exist within the service.

There is an excellent staff training programme and each member of staff has a training and development plan. Staff attend a wide range of training courses which they confirm in discussion and via training records. Two staff are qualified in 'team teach' behaviour management. There is a supervision policy and supervision contract which have been diligently prepared. Staff receive supervision each half term and written notes of supervision sessions are held. Staff appraisals are held annually. Staff confirm their satisfaction of the school's training and supervision arrangements and are of the opinion that the school is very supportive in these areas. Staff communication forums are excellent with weekly staff meetings being held and two staff handover meetings each day. Minutes of meetings evidence agendas, discussion and decisions.

There are excellent internal quality assurance systems in place and all areas of the service are monitored and audited closely by the head of care and deputy head of care who sign appropriate records following scrutiny. Parent and student questionnaires are received annually and complement the school's monitoring activities. Standard 33 (half termly) visits occur unannounced and also show a high level of monitoring and scrutiny including discussion with staff and students. The school has an annual development plan which takes into account issues, the person responsible for action and cost estimates. The school has a current insurance liability certificate.

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):