

Windlestone School

Inspection report for residential special school

Unique reference number	SC007615
Inspection date	23 February 2009
Inspector	Steve Pearson
Type of Inspection	Key

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Date of last inspection	10 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

This is a residential special school for 72 children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school opened in 2006 and provides 20 residential places on weekdays for boys and girls, aged from 11 years old up to 16 years old. Accommodation comprises of a purpose-built residential block with two ten-bedded mixed gender units. Most bedrooms are single-bedded and all bedrooms have en-suite showers and toilets. Residential pupils have access to the extended day facilities provided at the school until 19.30 each weekday.

There were 13 young people staying in the residential units at the time of the inspection. The inspector spoke with all of the young people and 15 young people also completed surveys about the quality of the residential care.

Summary

This was an announced, key inspection and so all the key national minimum standards were assessed. The inspection also assessed whether the requirements and recommendations from the previous inspection on 10 March 2008 had been completed. These were about food hygiene, storage of hazardous chemicals, placement plans, freedom of movement within the residential units, the closed circuit television (CCTV) system and recruitment procedures.

Overall, the care arrangements in place within the residential units are sound. Health is promoted well and the food is nutritional and varied. However, the recording of administration of medications, some of which are quite powerful, is not adequately robust.

Students are cared for safely. However, the recording of the use of physical interventions and sanctions means that, although these measures are not used much in the residential units, there is nevertheless insufficient accountability designed into the recording systems.

The assessment of risks relating to individual young people, also means that the staff are not enabled to have an adequately clear understanding of the likelihood or impact of such hazards, nor what they should do to reduce the risk of each hazard. There is also insufficient accountability for the use of the alarm system fitted to bedroom doors in the residential unit.

The residential units themselves are homely and provide excellent facilities. However, the quality of life is being spoiled by the heating system, which means the building is often too hot. This causes some students to feel sick and overwhelmed.

The staff are well-supported and provide consistent and quality care, based on a school ethos of tolerance and valuing students as individuals. The staff are outstanding at promoting equality and diversity across the school. They are particularly skilled at promoting awareness of differences in culture, gender, race and sexuality and how these issues can affect identity and how people live.

In terms of how the school is organised, a significant concern is the school's failure to adequately self-assess, against the contents of the national minimum standards for residential special schools. Ready access to these standards and ongoing adherence to their contents is vital, if overall outcomes are to improve.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The food hygiene arrangements are now improved because the staff now regularly record the temperatures of the fridges and freezers. The safety of young people has also been protected because substances hazardous to health, for example, cleaning chemicals, are now locked away.

Young people's freedom to move around the residential units has improved, since the interconnecting doors between the communal areas and the bedrooms are now left unlocked.

There is greater accountability for the use of the CCTV monitoring system used within the residential units. Its use is now described in the school's statement of purpose and parents and young people have signed to say they accept it.

The recruitment procedures are now more robust because a member of staff at the school contacts referees, to confirm the reference received is genuine.

The needs of young people are now more clearly described in placement plans. However, these are still not fully suitable and so a recommendation made at the previous inspection has been repeated.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Students' health is promoted well. Plenty of useful written information is made available for students to read in their own time, for example, leaflets are available in the health room. Good arrangements are in place, to promote students' emotional health, including promotion of emotional literacy and support from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Medications are recorded systematically. However, failure to follow the guidelines of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, means that the recording is not as accountable and robust as it could be. All staff are trained to administer first aid if necessary. However, parental permission for this has not been obtained, so there is less accountability for its use.

The quality of food served is excellent. Menus only describe what is eaten at lunch and tea, so this presents an incomplete assessment of the quality of nutrition. There are excellent arrangements in place, to enable students to understand the effects of culture on diet. Theme nights are regularly held, to help students learn about food eaten by people from different cultures around the world.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Arrangements in place to maintain and promote students' safety are broadly appropriate.

Privacy is promoted adequately and dignity is promoted well for both genders of students. Concerns and complaints are responded to well. However, parents are not adequately informed about how they may raise concerns with Ofsted, should they wish to do so.

The staff are aware of how to respond to allegations, suspicions or evidence of abuse and all staff receive suitable training about such matters. Students are well protected from being bullied. Some bullying does take place from time to time and the staff respond quickly and

effectively when it arises. Good policies and procedures are in place, should any student go missing from the school.

The staff manage the students' behaviour fairly and use tolerance and praise successfully. However, Ofsted have not been notified when the school asked the police to attend when the behaviour of a student was causing concern. Additionally, there is insufficient accountability for the use of sanctions and physical interventions, due to sub-standard recording and a failure to regularly enable students to record their views or have their views recorded about such matters. The staff are trained in behaviour management, including the use of physical intervention. However, they have not signed to say that they understand and will abide by the policies and procedures. This also means that the arrangements are not as robust as they could be.

Suitable arrangements are in place for the safe recruitment of staff. A record of all the recruitment checks is maintained and no one can work in the residential units, until they have had a Criminal Records Bureau check.

The premises are safe. Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires. Fire drills are conducted regularly. This helps to promote the safety of people in the home. Risks to people's welfare are suitably assessed, although a failure to assess the likelihood and impact of hazards, particularly in relation to the behaviour of students, means the arrangements are not as robust or clear as they could be.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The staff are good at helping students to learn and to achieve their potential.

There are effective arrangements in place, to help students to continue the progress and learning they have achieved in school in the residential units. For example, the residential staff also work in the classrooms and this ensures continuity. Additionally, the young people have the use of a computer in the residential units and they can save their work securely on it.

There is a good range of activities and students particularly value this. The identity and self-worth of students is boosted, by the celebration of their birthdays, for example, by holding a party.

Young people receive good individual support, through regular one-to-one time with a personal tutor. They also have access to independent support, for example, an independent person visits the residential units regularly and meets with the students, to discuss any issues with them. Excellent arrangements are in place, to promote awareness of various cultures and promotion of gender-related issues. Each term the staff promote awareness of a different culture. At the time of the inspection, the staff were promoting awareness of the coal mining culture, prevalent in the local area in recent years. Additionally, good arrangements are in place to support female students, as they only make up 20 per cent of the students. For example, there is a girls club, which meets regularly and the school nurse also attends these meetings, to offer any advice or information as necessary.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Students are fully enabled to have a say about the running of the school and about their own care plans. There are regular residential and whole-school meetings. At such meetings, the staff are skilled at enabling all young people to express their opinions. Comments are recorded and acted upon and so the meetings are a highly effective means of resolving issues. Additionally, students have one-to-one time with a named member of staff, for example, a personal tutor and students also find this system supportive, as it is more private.

Good arrangements are in place, to enable students to learn useful skills for independent living. The older students stay fewer nights per week in the residential units and this helps them to prepare for when they leave the school aged 16 years old. In addition, a member of staff known as a progression mentor works with final year students and with students for another two terms after they have left the school. Connexions, the young people's information and advice service, also has an office in the school.

Each student has a placement plan, which describes their needs and how staff will help to meet these needs. Although useful work has been done to improve these plans, there is scope to improve them, so that each member of staff can be clear about what they must do, to help meet each young person's specific needs.

Students are well enabled to maintain contact with their families while they are staying in the residential units. Family members can visit the units at all reasonable times and students have ready access to a telephone. Staff also maintain regular contact with families and inform them of students' progress.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The premises are well maintained and provide good facilities for students. Each student has an en-suite bedroom, including shower and toilet. As a means of promoting students' welfare, CCTV is used in the corridors of the residential units and an alarm system is used on bedroom doors at night time. Use of the alarm system is not described in the statement of purpose. Additionally, its use is not described in placement plans and written approval has not been sought from each student's parent or placing authority. This means parents and placing authorities are not adequately informed about the alarm system and it is unclear whether the school is fully justified in the use of a such a monitoring system.

The quality of the residential provision is let down by an inadequate heating system. This means some parts of the building can be too hot and other parts are too cold. Some young people find the excessive heat makes them feel sick and some staff find it unbearable.

There are strong links with the local community. Students are helped to develop self worth and understanding of others as a result of useful help they offer, for example, to older people in the community.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The school has a clear, written statement of purpose and this promotes values of tolerance and acceptance. Such values are clearly demonstrated in the day-to-day interactions between the staff and the students.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. In many different ways, the staff enable students to develop their own identity, while providing useful information and experiences about the implications of race, gender, culture and sexuality. Within the school, there is an ethos of tolerance and of valuing individuals. This helps young people to develop their own identity and enables them to develop positive opinions about themselves and others. Examples of such excellent work includes enabling students to become involved in mixing with and helping others in the community, learning and experiencing local and more distant cultures, supporting students with their developing sexuality and gender-related issues, promotion of understanding the effects of culture on diet and maintenance of democratic and fair processes, to ensure all students have an equal say about the care they receive.

There is an appropriate gender mix of staff. Students are looked after by staff who provide positive and consistent care. However the overall staffing arrangements are unclear because the school's staffing policy is not adequately descriptive. This means that other people including parents, placing authorities and Ofsted cannot be so readily assured of what the staffing arrangements are.

It is also difficult to ascertain when specific, individual members of staff have worked in the residential unit, because a historical, accurate account of the actual hours worked, is not maintained for long enough. This means there is not adequate accountability for who has worked and when.

Staff are supported well, both formally and informally. They receive suitable levels of professional supervision and have regular staff meetings. However, for residential staff, arrangements for performance management and longer-term development are falling short because these staff do not receive annual appraisals by their line manager.

There are good levels of staffing in the residential units and all of the staff either have appropriate qualifications in caring for young people or are currently studying for such qualifications.

The Headteacher and senior staff monitor the school's records every half-term or per term as appropriate. The Headteacher also writes an annual report but this does not include an assessment of the school's compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools. Additionally, the Headteacher and staff do not have ready access to a copy of these standards. It is therefore concerning, that the school is not maintaining an adequate awareness of such important benchmarking guidance, against which the quality of care is measured.

The care provided is also monitored by an external representative, who visits the school and produces a report of the findings shortly afterwards. However, these reports are not being produced often enough. Consequently, the Headteacher and governors are not receiving independent feedback, about potential shortfalls in the quality of care at an appropriate frequency, which means such shortfalls may not be remedied soon enough.

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):

- obtain and retain on file for each student, prior written permission from a person or body with parental responsibility for that student, for the staff to administer first aid if necessary (NMS 14.10)
- follow the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's recommendations about the recording of controlled drugs (NMS 14.20)
- ensure that written information such as the brochures and statement of purpose are updated to inform parents how they can make a complaint directly to Ofsted (NMS 4.8)
- ensure that Ofsted is notified of any serious incident which has necessitated the police being called to the school (NMS 7.2)
- ensure the recording of sanctions meets the recommendations described in the standard (NMS 10.9)
- enable students to write their views, or have their views recorded, and add their signature to any entry about them in the bound record of physical interventions (NMS 10.14)
- ensure that all staff who have direct contact with students have read and signed a copy of the school's policies on measures of control, discipline and physical intervention (NMS 10.19)
- include a measure of likelihood and severity when assessing the risks of hazards to young people (NMS 26.3)
- ensure that students' placement plans are specific and sufficiently detailed to meet their needs (NMS 17)
- ensure that the use of the bedroom door alarm system is specifically approved by each student's placing authority or parent and ensure that the use of the alarm system is described in the school's statement of purpose (NMS 23.7)
- ensure that the heating in the residential units is satisfactory and fully meets the needs of the students (NMS 24.14)
- maintain and retain records of food eaten at breakfast and supper for a year and rosters recording the identities of the staff and other persons who actually worked at the school or with students from the school, by both day and night for at least five years from the date of the last entry (NMS 19.2)

- ensure that the school's staffing policy describes the issues recommended by the standard (NMS 28.2)
- ensure all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised annually by their line manager (NMS 30.6)
- ensure that the headteacher's annual report includes an assessment of the school's compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools (NMS 32.4)
- ensure that the governing body receive a written report on the conduct of the school from a person visiting the school on their behalf per half term (NMS 33.1).