

Muntham House School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Paul Taylor / Gavin Thomas
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Date of last inspection	7 November 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

Muntham House is a non maintained Residential Special School for boys aged between eight and 18 years. It is a designated school for pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties who may in addition have Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder (AD(H)D). All pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs.

The school buildings are set in extensive grounds at Barnes Green, near Horsham, West Sussex. Accommodation is located in the main building and in a separate building for the older boys. The main building has accommodation divided into three units, Hever, Bodiam and Arundel. The separate accommodation for older boys is called The Bothy and is centrally located in the school grounds. There are numerous outdoor areas for the boys to enjoy games.

Summary

At this announced inspection key standards were assessed. Muntham House delivers a good standard of care which has some outstanding features. The staff team work consistently across the whole academic and care curriculum and the pupils are very well supported. Assessments and individually tailored care programs are of a particularly high standard and this ensures that the school works extremely hard to support and develop pupils who have at times, complex and challenging needs. The staff team are committed and well managed and this results in a school which promotes the wellbeing, safety and development of the young people. Six recommendations were made as a result of this inspection.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection eight recommendations were made. Seven of these have been responded to and the one outstanding relates to the ongoing refurbishment of the school premises. Individual health needs and written consent to medical treatment are clearly outlined in each young person's health care plan. Consideration has been given to introducing break time snacks and juice and this is the subject of appraisal and research by the teaching member of staff co-ordinating the 'Healthy Schools' agenda.

The child protection policy and process is now up to date and is underpinned by the local Safeguarding Policy.

Records of physical restraint are mostly satisfactory, however, as mentioned in the body of the report some details are sometimes missing. Rewards and sanctions are consistent across all the boarding areas.

At the previous inspection comments had been made with regards to the temperature of one particular radiator. On this occasion no comments or complaints were received with regards to water or radiator temperature. Radiators were not active at the time of the inspection as the weather was good.

The minutes of the school council are available to all pupils on notice boards. No fire doors were seen to be propped open at this inspection. This had been identified as an issue at the last inspection.

The ongoing refurbishment of the décor and windows continues and there are some areas which have not had this completed yet. This recommendation stands. Reports written by governors, following monitoring visits, contain comments and recommendations in line with their obligations outlined in the National Minimum Standards.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Each pupil has a health plan in place which details information about medical history and current health needs. The members of staff responsible for the administration of medication and oversight of medical issues are known as 'Health Bursars'. They have the experience, knowledge and training to ensure that the support they offer to the pupils is of a very good standard. They also provide advice to members of staff if needed. All of the pupils have consent for all forms of medical treatment. The school works hard to ensure that any specialist health needs are met by external professionals such as psychologists, psychiatrists and speech and language therapists. Appointments with other health professionals such as dentists, doctors and opticians are arranged by the school if needed.

There is clear written guidance in place with regards to the promotion of health and healthy lifestyles. This is underpinned by having a Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) program which educates and guides the pupils about various issues including substance abuse, sex education, relationships and keeping safe. The program is aimed at a level commensurate with each young person's understanding.

The food offered to the pupils is varied and healthy. The catering staff are well aware of any specific dietary needs whether these are based on religious, cultural or medical grounds. The pupils are offered a choice of menus and some have the opportunity to eat their main after school meal in their boarding areas. This process also involves the pupils preparing and cooking the meals. The menu gives the pupils the opportunity to enjoy foods from a variety of different cultural backgrounds. They can voice their opinions about the food and their preferences in formal settings, such as the school council, and informally with tutors and care staff. The school has a member of the teaching staff who is co-ordinating the effort to achieve 'Healthy Schools' status and this has led to a review of the menu.

The approach of the school ensures that the dietary and health needs of the pupils are met to a very good standard.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

There is a clear policy and guidance in place for the staff to follow in relation to ensuring that the confidentiality and privacy of the pupils is protected. Staff are aware of this and know with whom they can share sensitive information. Additionally, all confidential information is kept securely stored. The pupils have clear guidance on what standards of dress and modesty they need to maintain whilst living in a shared boarding environment. For example, they are made aware that they need to wear a dressing gown on their way to and from the shower area.

Pupils are confident to express their opinions. They have a number of avenues they can follow to voice their complaints. These include members of staff, key workers, tutors, members of the senior management team, an independent visitor and visiting governors. Parents are also given information on how to complain and receive advice and guidance from the Family and Induction Team (FIT) if they want it. The school's complaints policy does not yet contain the contact details for Ofsted.

The school has clear guidance in place for the staff to follow in the event that they have concerns about a pupil's welfare. All members of staff are offered regular training to ensure that they are aware of their obligations. The principal keeps thorough, detailed and well organised records of any child protection concerns. These include details of all agencies involved and how the issue has been resolved.

The pupils are very aware of what behaviour constitutes bullying. If incidents of bullying do occur the pupils are clear that the members of staff will deal with this. The dynamics between the pupils can at times be volatile and the staff work hard to manage the behaviour and to ensure that any differences can be resolved. The school promotes a sense that the whole community is responsible to challenge and eliminate bullying and the pupils are able to report any concerns verbally, in writing and by using the school's intranet.

The staff team are very aware of each pupil's vulnerability and level of risk should they go missing. Pen pictures are kept in each pupil's key work file together with a photograph. This ensures that the information is readily available to the police should a pupil go missing. Each pupil has a risk assessment carried out which assesses the likelihood of them going missing and therefore what level of supervision they need.

Pupils report that the rules and sanctions imposed for negative behaviour are fair. Any sanctions imposed are recorded in a bound book. The pupils are aware of how they need to behave in order to achieve rewards such as outings away from the school site and certificates of achievement. Their achievements and successes are celebrated by the staff and rest of the school community by acknowledging improvements in school assemblies and by receiving certificates for good behaviour.

Members of staff receive regular training in the method of restraint used by the school. Records of restraint are on the whole good, although there are occasions when the antecedent background to an incident is not clear and the length of time that a pupil is held is not always contained in the report. Emphasis on de-escalation ensures that the members of staff understand that physical control is a last resort. Additionally each pupil has an individual behaviour management program which outlines what may trigger challenging behaviour and the best strategy to de-escalate the situation.

The Estates Manager ensures that the monitoring of fire equipment, gas and electrical installations and environmental hazards, such as the ongoing building construction, are regularly monitored and assessed to minimise risks. The system in place ensures that the monitoring is consistently achieved and reviewed. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated and fire drills occur on a regular basis.

All members of staff have a Criminal Records Bureau check carried out on them before they commence employment. One member of staff had started work after positive verbal references had been received, however, these had not been underpinned by written references.

The school's approach and systems ensure that the welfare and safety of the boarders is valued and promoted to a good standard.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils benefit from the school's holistic approach which encompasses residential and educational staff working closely together. They receive outstanding levels of individual support from staff within the school. Comprehensive and regularly reviewed plans are in place to address all aspects of identified need. Individual needs are well met and are kept under constant review. Care staff play an important part in reinforcing positive behaviour and in contributing to the pupils' educational and social achievements. The close liaison between care staff and education staff enables a consistent approach to the care of the pupils. Some teaching staff work an extended day which entails them working with the care staff in the boarding areas. This ensures consistency of approach and an ethos whereby the teaching and care roles are seen to be shared and cohesive. Care staff support the young people with their homework on a daily basis and provide active support in areas such as literacy. Staff know the pupils well and are aware of their individual needs and targets.

The pupils have a number of adults to whom they can approach for support and advice. One pupil said 'there is always someone to speak to.' The FIT team ensure that parents are made aware of any issues affecting their children in the school and they in turn alert the staff team to any issues from home which may affect their behaviour or performance at school.

The school has an excellent activities programme and on each evening and throughout the weekend, the pupils are able to choose between activities on the school on site and activities taking place in the community. Activities are well planned and varied and it is clear that the pupils are given opportunities to experience events and occasions which enrich and develop their progress.

The level of individual support offered to the pupils is outstanding. Each pupil's needs and idiosyncrasies are known and the staff work very closely across the curriculum to ensure that each pupil receives the support and nurturing that they need.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils are given numerous opportunities to voice their opinions on how the school is run. There is a school council, which meets regularly with representatives from the school staff team, to discuss various issues. The pupils have managed to influence areas such as menus and activities as part of the school council meetings. Minutes of the meetings are available for all pupils to peruse if they wish.

Pupils meet with their key workers on a regular basis to discuss their progress, concerns and targets. Targets are agreed by the pupils and this gives them the opportunity to influence decisions about themselves. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to meet school

governors and senior members of staff. Additionally, the pupils are constantly able to share their views on how life is for them at the school, on a daily informal basis in their interactions with class teachers, tutors and residential care staff.

The admission of new pupils and the process of transition and moving on, are areas which are carefully thought through. The detail of planning of these processes involves multi disciplinary input co-ordinated by FIT. The pupil's strengths, weaknesses and aspirations are known by all involved in the process. The school appreciates and values parents input in this process, which is underpinned by their knowledge of their own children. It is also recognised by the school that this process can be difficult for the parents as well as the pupils. Support for them is readily available from the FIT, who will advocate for them if necessary. The approach to assessment, ensuring that needs are met and responded to, and ensuring that pupils are supported, is outstanding.

The pupils are able to go home at regular intervals. They can contact families and friends using their own mobile telephones, the school's landline and by the internet.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The members of staff responsible for the maintenance of the school premises, work hard to ensure that the quality of the premises are maintained to a good level. The school is a large old building and there is a rolling refurbishment plan to ensure that natural wear and tear is addressed. Additionally to this rolling program the maintenance team respond promptly carrying out emergency repairs.

Some areas of the boarding accommodation have been refurbished whilst some are awaiting refurbishment and redecoration. Some of the furniture in parts of the boarding accommodation is old and worn whilst in other areas it is new and in good condition.

Pupils are able to personalise their rooms and dormitory areas with posters and pictures and have sufficient storage space for their clothing and belongings.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The school has a prospectus which describes what it intends to deliver and the underlying ethos behind the running of the school. The prospectus is currently being reviewed by the FIT.

The school's staffing arrangements, both day and night, ensure the welfare of pupils is protected and promoted. Staffing levels are sufficient to provide appropriate supervision both on and off site and to support pupils in relation to their assessed individual needs. Pupils benefit from the continuity of care provided by close working achieved between both teaching and care staff.

Training for the staff team is regular and varied. The staff team receives at least one day of training every three weeks and this includes subjects such as behaviour management, child protection, first aid and drug awareness. Additional training is available to members of staff if that is identified in their appraisals as being appropriate. For example, a member of staff has qualified as a canoe instructor so that he can take the pupils canoeing. There is a rolling program

for National Vocational Training (NVQ) Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People and the school continues to strive to achieve a ratio of 80% of staff to have this qualification.

Staff receive regular supervision on a formal basis and are able to receive on going support from senior members of staff on an informal basis. Members of staff report that senior members of staff are approachable and operate an 'open door' policy. Additionally, members of staff responsible for each boarding area meet on a regular basis to discuss the pupils' needs and routines. The care team also meet regularly as a whole body so that communication of information is achieved across the board. The care staff also have the opportunity to meet with teaching staff briefly, twice a day when they take the young people to school and collect them at the end of the day. This ensures that any incidents of note are passed on so that the young people can receive the support and attention that they need. Policies and procedures are available for the staff on the school's intranet should they need specific guidance on any area.

Senior members of staff regularly monitor, comment upon and endorse key records such as risk assessments, records of sanctions and restraints, minutes of meetings and any significant incidents and accidents. The small size of the school means that key members of staff are able to quickly respond to any issues, such as individual pupils coming to note for poor behaviour or struggling within the school.

The school has an active board of governors who meet regularly and also visit the school on a very regular basis. Visits undertaken by governors are the subject of reports which include recommendations and suggestions for improvement. Senior members of staff in the school do not formally respond in writing to comments made during these visits.

Promotion of equality and diversity is good. The individual needs of each young person are known and promoted and difference in cultural background is seen as an opportunity to learn from each other. The PSHE program operated in the school also ensures that young people are able to learn about differences in culture, beliefs and background and that differences are to be enjoyed and celebrated.

The systems operated in the school together with close communication achieved between key members of staff, ensure that the care of the young people is monitored to a good standard.

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):

- include the contact details for Ofsted in the complaints policy. (NMS 3)

- ensure that restraint records contain all the details required by National Minimum Standards. (NMS 10)
- ensure that written references are received before a member of staff commences employment. (NMS 27)
- continue with the refurbishment program so that the decor and furnishings in all the boarding areas are in good condition. (NMS 24)
- continue to work towards achieving a ratio of at least 80% of the staff team who have achieved National Vocational Training (NVQ) Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. (NMS 31)
- provide a written response to comments and recommendations made by governors following their monitoring visits. (NMS 32)