

King's Mill School

Inspection report for residential special school

Unique reference number	SC055984
Inspection date	22 March 2010
Inspector	Simon Morley
Type of Inspection	Key

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Date of last inspection	6 February 2009

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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

The local authority owns this school, which provides education for over 70 children with a range of learning disabilities and autism. It is a special school and all children who attend have a statement of educational needs. 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-storey 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, which included all the outcome areas and checked compliance with previous recommendations from the last inspection.

There is good and outstanding practice that is effective in promoting the health and welfare of children. This is seen in the all-round progress children make with their social and personal development.

Children benefit from an environment and ethos that respects their individuality, is sensitive to their needs and nurtures their development. There are some areas requiring improvement but overall the quality rating is good.

As a result of this inspection good practice recommendations are made in relation to: medication and physical intervention records; assessment and care planning of children's needs; and management monitoring by senior managers and governors.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There have been a number of improvements to meet some of the recommendations from the last inspection.

A new medication policy has been implemented helping ensure children receive their medication safely at the right times. There is better practice at promoting children's dignity. A feasibility study has been completed with regards to the provision of a passenger lift in the residence but the lift has not been installed.

Management monitoring still needs to improve.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

There are good arrangements for children to receive good health care and health education ensuring their health and welfare is promoted and protected.

The school works well in partnership with parents so that children have regular health checks and attend their medical appointments. Parents retain full responsibility for their children's health care and are supported well by the school helping children receive all the necessary health care they need. Parents inform the school of their children's health needs which is used to form individual health plans for care staff to follow and ensure health needs are met and monitored. In addition, children learn about health and personal care issues at school to help them have healthy lifestyles. As a result, the school has awards for health promotion and providing a healthy environment for the children.

There is secure storage to keep medication safe from the children. There are suitable records of medicines that children bring into school, that are administered to them and what they take home. These are for accurate reference and to ensure children get the right medication at the right time. There are some gaps in the records regarding the medication children take home but this has not impacted on the way their health is being promoted. A new policy about medication has been written since the last inspection which has helped to improve practice in this area and protect children's health. Staff are trained in first aid and a range of health topics to the benefit of children's health care.

Children are well-fed at school, there is plenty to eat and fresh fruit and drinking water is provided. Meals are healthy and nutritious and special diets are provided for children who need them. Staff monitor children's individual diets and encourage healthy eating.

Children like the regular opportunities for exercise they get, outdoor activities and access to local leisure facilities, to help keep fit and healthy.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

There is good practice to ensure children are safe at the school. Children like staying at the school and they

feel safe and well cared for. There is a warm, welcoming and friendly atmosphere in the school.

Children's privacy and dignity is respected in line with the school's values ensuring children are seen and treated as individuals. Children say staff are friendly and feel able to talk to them about any concerns and know how to complain. Staff are responsive to the different ways that children communicate and treat them

sensitively and professionally. This has improved since the last inspection.

The school has clear procedures understood by staff to respond to any child protection concerns. Staff know about the procedures and they have training about this subject. Children receive guidance about personal safety and it is rare that any of them go missing from the school. Staff know what to do to protect children's safety should this occur.

There is hardly any bullying and children are taught not to bully each other. Staff view the children in a very positive way. Staff are non-confrontational, children have time and space to talk through any conflict and are supported to develop strategies to manage and be responsible for their own behaviour. Rewards for good behaviour are preferred over the use of sanctions or consequences for poor behaviour. As a result children's behaviour is very good and there is little poor behaviour for staff to manage. Parents comment that the school is effective in helping children develop appropriate social behaviour.

Physical intervention used by staff when children are challenging is very rare and is a last resort to keep children safe. Any use of sanctions and physical intervention are recorded so they can be monitored to ensure they are being used appropriately to promote children's safety and welfare. Not all incidents of physical intervention have been recorded properly but this has not affected the outcome in promoting good behaviour

The school is kept safe and well-maintained, children benefit from a safe and secure environment. In addition there is good risk management which helps support children to develop their independence and potential in a safe manner.

Staff recruitment processes are thorough to ensure only suitable staff work in the school.

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 progress. This is reflected in feedback from children, parents and governors who all have very high views of the school,

the care of children and how well they achieve.

Children enjoy coming to school and staying in the residence, they think it is great fun, that staff are very kind and helpful and they really enjoy the activities. There is an excellent whole school approach to supporting children with their development, through the integration and communication between care, teaching staff and parents.

Caring, sensitive staff are effective at supporting all children with a range of individual needs and interests. There is a strong, inclusive ethos and very good links with the local and wider community, all children have opportunities to be involved in school projects and activities. 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, gaining more confidence and developing self-esteem.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The school values children's views and supports them to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run. Children are regularly asked what they think and the school responds well to their feedback. Children are elected on to the school council annually by their peers and learn about participation and advocacy. Children are keen fundraisers for different charities, which is effectively promoted through the school council.

Preparation for children who are going to stay in the residence is sensitive and planned to make sure children feel safe and comfortable. This process includes a number of evening visits before staying overnight. There are very good relationships between staff and children. Children are very positive about the school, are happy there and say the staff are kind and helpful. Children look forward to staying at the residence and socialising with their friends. They are able to contact their parents by telephone when they stay and parents are welcome to visit.

Feedback from children and parents is very positive about how their care needs are met. The school does some assessment and planning of children's needs but this does not fully meet the required standard. Written plans describing how children's care needs will be met are not comprehensive and may result in some care needs of children being overlooked. However there is regular contact and support for families including home visits. This provides additional support for parents, and also enhances the care of children by understanding more about their home life and how this affects them. There is good practice of holding person-centred reviews to support children making decisions about their care, education and future.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

There is good support for children to develop their independence skills and potential. This is facilitated well with a range of activities during the daily life at school and is balanced with children's needs and risks to safety. Care staff provide effective support to develop independence and help older children gain an accredited award based on what they have done and learned. The school is pro-active at encouraging parents to plan ahead so that children have the support and services they need when they leave the school.

The management team and care staff make best use of the size, space and facilities the residence and school have to offer children. A plan has been made to install a passenger lift in the residence to allow wheelchair users to go upstairs. This has not been implemented. Instead best use is made of what is available downstairs including a range of disabled facilities. There are a number of different play areas both indoors and outdoors and a good range of facilities for all children to use when they stay. This helps overcome some of the limitations inherent in the design and layout of the building. As a result children benefit from pleasant premises with facilities that meet their needs.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is good management of the school, avoiding institutional practice and upholding the school ethos and values. This provides a strong child-centred approach, that helps children at the school to develop their potential.

There is a range of information for parents and children to find out what the school is like including a child-friendly version. In addition the admissions process to staying in the residence gives children a good opportunity try out the 24-hour curriculum and experience what a short break at school is like.

There is low staff turnover and high staffing levels so that children benefit from good levels of support from care staff who know them well. Staff are well-trained, have a wide range of experience and are also encouraged to achieve the desired qualification in caring for children

and young people. This helps ensure children are looked after by competent staff. This is further enhanced by regular supervision and opportunities for staff to develop their skills and experience.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Children receive good quality care based on their individual needs in relation to age, gender, disability and cultural backgrounds. There is an effective approach to inclusion with equal opportunities for everyone to be included in activities, school projects and the school council. There are well-developed links with the local community and children benefit from the wider experiences this offers. Children are taught to be tolerant and they learn about other races and cultures.

There is a 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, reports to governors and monitoring by governors which all fall short of the required standard. This system lacks accountability and does not thoroughly ensure the welfare of children is effectively monitored. This is shown up by the shortfalls identified in the previous outcome areas. Overall though there are some key strengths in how the school is managed and the ability to deliver positive outcomes for children justifying the good judgement for this outcome area.

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 are accurate records of medication that are booked out of the residence (NMS 14.20)
- ensure there is a record of any use of physical intervention on a child by an adult, that is kept in a separate, bound and numbered book and includes all the information required by this standard (NMS 10.14)
- ensure children have all their needs assessed and there are written plans describing how these needs will be met when they stay in the residence (NMS 17.1)
- ensure that a senior member of staff monitors the records listed in NMS 32.2; ensure there is an annual written review of the residence as detailed in NMS 32.4; and ensure governors monitoring visits meet the requirements of NMS 33. (NMS 32.2, 32.4 & 33.3)