

# Philpots Manor School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Elaine Southall
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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	3 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

Philpots Manor School is an independent residential special school and further training centre that provides a holistic approach to education based upon the social and educational principles of Rudolf Steiner. It specialises in provision for children and young people between the ages of 9 and 19 years of age who have been unable to learn and develop within mainstream education. All pupils demonstrate some degree of emotional, behavioural, communication or learning difficulty. The young people who board at the school live in small residential care groups in seven separate houses within the grounds of the school, which is in a quiet rural location near East Grinstead. At the time of this inspection, there were 33 boarders, six girls and 27 boys. 11 boys are also educated at the school as day pupils. The boarding arrangements are flexible in order to meet individual needs, however, the majority of the boarders return home every weekend. The children are accommodated in small family groups within six units and benefit from an intensive level of support in both the unit and the school environment.

### Summary

The quality of the boarding provision at the school is good overall, with outstanding features in the individual support that is provided to the children and young people, transition planning and the management of health and safety policies and procedures. The boarders feel safe and happy at the school, one saying that, "I'm happy here, I enjoy it all" and another that it is "...the best school that I have ever been to." In their responses to questionnaires, parents also demonstrated a very high degree of satisfaction with the care provided for their children. The care staff are skilled and experienced and work closely with the academic staff to provide a safe environment where the young people can be supported and encouraged to recognise and fulfil their individual potential.

This was a key announced inspection.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

### Improvements since the last inspection

The school has taken appropriate action to address the four recommendations made at the last inspection of the boarding provision. The frequency of supervision provided for care staff fulfils requirements. The school's policies and procedures are undergoing a process of review and new policies have been implemented that provide clear frameworks for relationships between students and the school's provision of respite care.

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

There are good procedures in place for promoting the health and wellbeing of young people, and questionnaires show that they have confidence in the care that is provided if they are unwell. Care plans show that all individual medical, physical and emotional needs are carefully assessed and met. A separate health plan is completed that is reviewed and updated as necessary, detailing any changes made to prescribed medication. The school's medical coordinator liaises closely with boarders' families and any medical professionals involved in their healthcare to ensure that all information held at the school is up-to-date. Most boarders stay registered with

their home GP, although temporary registration with a local GP can be arranged. Speech and language provision and a counselling service are available to the boarders at the school, together with access to a qualified medical doctor who is also trained in complementary medicine. Appropriate written parental medical consent is held in each young person's file.

The food provided for boarders is of a good quality. Healthy eating is always promoted and menus are varied and offer a wide choice.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Staff show respect for the privacy of young people at all times and information is securely stored. Young people are clearly confident in expressing their thoughts and feelings and the complaints procedure is clearly laid out in the Student's Guide. The number of complaints is very low, and records show that young people's concerns are dealt with in an appropriate and timely way.

Clear procedures are in place that address the management of any occasion when a young person is absent from the premises without permission, although incidents are very rare. Bullying is not identified as a problem by the young people, and they feel safe and confident that staff will help them to manage any difficult situations. A central log has recently been introduced to record and monitor the response made to all incidents that involve bullying. Any instance of three or more events is taken up as an individual behaviour management planning issue.

Records show that the school's child protection and safeguarding systems procedures are well structured and keep young people safe. The care staff are well trained and clear about their role and responsibilities in child protection.

The school's approach to managing behavioural issues focuses upon positive encouragement and reinforcement of good behaviour, rather than reprimands for negative behaviour. Individual achievements are celebrated and rewarded at the weekly School Gathering on Friday mornings. All staff follow guidelines set out in detailed behaviour management plans that are sensitive to each young person's individual issues. Excellent risk assessments are completed that include strategies for management of specific behaviours. Young people are fully involved in the plans, which include descriptions of the 'Old Me', the 'New Me' and the agreed shared expectations of the outcome of the behaviour plan. A new sanctions policy has been implemented and records show that sanctions given are appropriate and timely. Staff are trained in physical intervention, although management of episodes of challenging behaviour is focused upon containment and de-escalation. Staff provide a calm response, setting clear and consistent boundaries for the young people. Records of restraints are completed to a high standard.

The arrangements for promoting the health and safety of all those who live and work at the school are outstanding. External specialist contractors have been employed to assess and monitor every area of the school's premises and equipment that may pose a risk to the safety and wellbeing of the staff and young people. A very detailed and comprehensive new Health and Safety manual has recently been completed. The level of commitment in this area is outstanding. Records show that all fire equipment is regularly checked and that regular drills take place. Young people are clearly aware of the fire evacuation procedures. Risk assessments are in place for all activities, both on and off the premises.

Visitors to the school are carefully identified and monitored. However records show that not all of the checks required by the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools have been completed before new staff begin work in the school.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Groups in both the school and the residential provision are small, and the young people stay with the same class teacher for a number of years. This enables the growth of trusting relationships in an environment where each young person can reach their full academic and individual potential. The school curriculum meets the social and emotional needs of the young person, in addition to the academic. Good communication between the care and teaching staff ensures that consistent strategies support the young people at all times.

The level of individual support provided is outstanding and is a key strength of the school. Detailed care plans show great sensitivity to each young person's life story and specific needs. They are fully involved at every stage of the planning process and their thoughts and feelings about their day-to-day life at the school are taken into account. This enables them to feel valued and confident in stating their views and opinions about their own lives.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Detailed and comprehensive placement plans are sensitive to each young person's life story and specific needs. They are fully involved at every stage of the planning process and they are also routinely consulted about key issues in the school that particularly affect them, for example, the content of the school's new relationship and dating policy. Consultation has also resulted in a relaxation of the school uniform rules for younger pupils, who can now wear polo shirts and sweatshirts rather than shirts and pullovers and trainers rather than shoes. One young person stated that, "If I have something to say I have a chance to say it at a meeting."

The training centre meets the needs of young people over the age of 16 who need further guidance in the development of their independence skills. Some are supported in attending courses at local colleges while remaining resident at the school.

Transition planning procedures are outstanding. Copies of detailed and sensitive plans were seen to be signed by the young person and their Connexions advisor. The school has a designated member of staff with responsibility for reviews and transitions, who works hard to identify and liaise with agencies in the community that can support and encourage the young people when they move on from the school, and seek to establish themselves as adults.

Care staff work hard to ensure that regular contact is maintained with the parents and carers of boarders. Questionnaires showed that parents value highly the close relationship that they have with all the staff at the school, and that they feel fully involved in every aspect of the lives of their children.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

The school is located in spacious grounds in a quiet rural location. Seven boarding houses are set within the grounds, close to the main school building, where young people live in small

family groups with houseparents who establish secure and consistent daily routines for them. The standard of accommodation varies, but all houses are furnished and equipped to a satisfactory standard and provide comfortable and homely accommodation, with adequate toilet and bathroom facilities. Two of the houses have recently been refurbished and now provide very attractive accommodation that is of the highest standard. Most young people have single bedrooms, and those that share have their own individual space decorated with their personal belongings and choice of posters and pictures. Young people said that they are comfortable and satisfied with their accommodation.

## Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding at the school, lying at the heart of their practice, in clear recognition of the varied and complex needs of the young people. A three year accessibility action plan for the school premises has been implemented, in fulfilment of the 2001 Special Educational Needs and Disability Act, which extended the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act to cover education. Staff work hard to introduce activities and events that can be accessed by young people with specific needs, for example, a chess club that can be enjoyed by young people on the autistic spectrum. Expectations with regard to behavioural issues, such as tidying up, are supported by cards with visual prompts, gently reminding all young people about their responsibilities to others in the school community. The school celebrates the key Christian festivals, but also takes care to mark days important to other world religions at whole school gatherings and within the religion curriculum.

Clear descriptions of the residential care provision are available in the school prospectus and on the website. The Student's Guide sets out the boarding principles and purpose in a form that is accessible to the young people placed at the school.

There is a very stable team of skilled, experienced and committed care staff who provide consistency of care to the young people. The training programme, including National Vocational Qualifications, ensures that staff are equipped with the skills that they need to recognise and meet the needs of the young people. There is a satisfactory induction process for new staff, and regular supervision is provided.

The ethos and culture within the school promotes and enables open communication. Half-termly Standard 33 reports are of a high quality and monitoring by the senior management team ensures that care staff are supported in maintaining high standards of reflective practice at all times.

## 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 that new staff do not begin work at the school until satisfactory completion of all necessary checks and receipt of references (NMS 27)