

# Potterspury Lodge School

Inspection report for residential special school

---

|                                |                  |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC012962         |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 10 February 2010 |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Elaine Clare     |
| <b>Type of Inspection</b>      | Key              |

---

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>Address</b>                 | Potterspury Lodge School<br>Potterspury Lodge<br>TOWCESTER<br>Northamptonshire<br>NN12 7LL |
| <b>Telephone number</b>        | 01908 542912   |
| <b>Email</b>                   | mail@potterspurylodge.co.uk  |
| <b>Registered person</b>       | Potterspury Lodge School   |
| <b>Head of care</b>            | John W D Brown   |
| <b>Head / Principal</b>        | Clive Laidler  |
| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 3 February 2009  |

---

© Crown copyright 2010

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Cripins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: [www.tso.co.uk/bookshop](http://www.tso.co.uk/bookshop)

## 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 school is a long established school which opened in 1956. It is an independent special school for boys aged 8-18 years who have emotional, social and behavioural difficulties and associated learning difficulties. A significant number of pupils have Asperger's syndrome or autistic spectrum disorders. The school offers weekly boarding and day provision. All pupils have a statement of special needs and are referred to the school by the local authority.

The ethos of the school is linked to the Rudolf Steiner philosophy of educating pupils in a holistic manner and providing opportunities for progress in all aspects of life and study.

Many of the staff live on site, including most care staff. The main house is a large grade 2 listed building and accommodates some of the school classrooms, some boarding areas, the main office and medical room. Further boarding accommodation and school facilities are provided in various buildings adjacent to the main house.

The school is set in several acres of land providing a tranquil and spacious setting. A stream running into a small lake filled with various fish, where boys can fish for pleasure, marks the school boundary to one side. Another boundary is marked by a large vegetable garden, orchard and oakery, though these areas are out of bounds to students unless accompanied by an adult. A large field provides a football pitch, running track and large play area including climbing frames and swings. There is a skate park, tennis and basketball courts. Indoor facilities include a large sports hall, pottery and music room, a chapel and other educational facilities that can be used for extra-curricular activities.

The boarding accommodation consists of four self-contained units providing accommodation for groups of up to six boys. This accommodation is homely and comfortable. Boarding is currently available from Sunday evening to Friday, during term time only.

### Summary

The quality of boarding is good with many outstanding aspects. There is good leadership and a commitment to continuous improvement to enhance the facilities of the school and the outcomes for boarders.

Relationships between staff and young people are excellent. Staff endeavour to promote young people's safety and to support them to develop positive attitudes and behaviours. Young people have access to an excellent range of activities and the close links between the school and residential provision promote the development of achievement for all boarders.

There is a relaxed, friendly atmosphere throughout the boarding houses. One grandparent wrote about the school '(it) has a lovely secure feeling to it and I felt the whole atmosphere of the place was just what I would want for my grandson'. An area for development is to improve the external monitoring of the school by the trustees and to notify Ofsted of any significant events that happen within the school.

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 there were five good practice recommendations made to the head of care for the school to address. All these recommendations have been acted upon. There are regular checks on the emergency lighting and risk assessments have been completed for windows.

Medication has been overhauled and staff have all attended administering medication training. All records were correct and medication was stored well.

Staff supervision has much improved and an introduction of non-contact time has assisted staff to receive group supervision and additional training.

## **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are focused and committed to ensuring an outstanding quality provision for healthcare for young people staying at this school. Staff are proactive and responsive to young people's emotional and health care needs. Young people's files contain clear information about their health needs and the actions being taken to address these needs are well recorded. A therapy team provides individual consultations to support young people and staff in a wide range of health and social needs. The systems in place ensure that all the required health information is gathered from parents and shared with all agencies involved with the young people.

Staff receive training in first aid and there is always a qualified first aider on duty in the school. Appropriate records are kept of any accidents involving young people. The necessary parental consents for medical treatment, the administration of medicines and the use of first aid are held on young people's files. Training and guidance for young people on personal health care and safety is provided across the whole school. Staff demonstrate a good understanding and awareness of the health care needs of the young people in their care.

There are good arrangements in place for the receipt and storage of medicines in the school. The medication files are well organised and contain detailed medical and health information on the young people. The records of administration of prescribed medication were properly completed. Clear guidance is in place regarding the administration of medication. Parental consent for the school to administer medication to their children is sought and recorded. Young people return home when unwell and parents confirm that there is good communication from the school regarding medical matters.

There is a outstanding level of commitment to meeting the nutrition needs of the young people. The school provides good quantities of food, including fresh fruit and vegetables. One young person wrote 'The vegetables are home-grown - 100% organic - not GM!' Sufficient choice is offered, including hot and cold dishes. One parent wrote 'The school food is good and well balanced and the boys are helped to understand the benefits of healthy eating.' Staff supervise meal times where the young people are encouraged to try new foods. Drinking water is available and boarders have access to snacks, fresh fruit and drinks in the boarding houses. The staff and young people eat together at mealtimes and the focus is very much on encouraging a relaxed atmosphere and a positive social experience. Young people's comments about the food provided is positive and their observed enjoyment of meal times supports this.

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

The provision is good.

The young people feel that their privacy is respected. They are able to make private telephone calls from the main boarding house using a pay phone but many choose to use their own mobiles. The staff are good at ensuring the privacy of young people when bathing or attending to their personal needs. Information held about young people is stored securely and staff demonstrate a good awareness of the need to keep information confidential.

There are clear policies and procedures with regard to complaints. Information about complaints is made available to young people and spoke about frequently. The young people say that they feel able to tell any of the staff if they have a complaint or concern. Information is displayed throughout the boarding house contains the contact details for agencies, such as 'Childline'. The school has received some internal complaints with regard to the welfare of young people and these have been fully investigated and resolved.

The school has good procedures and policies with regard to bullying. The school has very few incidents of bullying. There are displays to help the young people understand when their behaviours may be construed as bullying. Written guidance is in place regarding the action to take if a young person goes missing. Following any incidents staff endeavour to discuss with the young person the reasons for absconding and appropriate action is taken to reduce the risk of further incidents occurring. Records demonstrate that there have been no unauthorised absences of this type outside school hours.

Staff are aware of the need to work together to provide a safe and caring place for the young people. Comments and records by staff demonstrate a good understanding of child protection issues. The head teacher is the school's designated child protection officer and ensures that staff receive child protection training. There have been some referrals to the local safeguarding team and these have been investigated and found to be unsubstantiated. Ofsted had not been notified about these allegations and subsequent investigations.

Staff recruitment procedures ensure that the young people are always cared for by staff who have had appropriate checks undertaken on their backgrounds. The young people confirm that they feel safe and well looked after at their school. One pupil wrote if he had a problem he 'would go to any of the school staff'.

Risk assessments, policies and procedures are in place to support the maintenance of a safe environment for young people. Records show that regular safety and servicing checks are undertaken to fire, electrical and water installations. Fire drills are undertaken ensuring all young people are familiar with the evacuation procedures.

The use of any form of physical intervention in the residential unit is used as a last resort and incidents are few. Records are maintained and are monitored regularly by the head of care to ensure compliance with the school's procedures and to identify any patterns. They are not, however, monitored by the trustees of the school. Staff are trained in physical management accredited by the British Institute for Learning Disability. The behaviour training is coordinated and organised by an outside provider, which provide a bespoke package for the individual needs of the school. Placement plans indicate that measures of control and disciplinary measures in place are based on developing positive relationships with young people in line with their

individual needs. Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for what they have done and they are encouraged to be a part of the decision-making process for any action to be taken and their views are recorded. They know what is expected of them when they are boarding and consider the rules to be fair.

Sanctions or consequences of poor behaviour are recorded within a book held on each young person's boarding house. Staff say that on occasion young people may have 'time out' or a transport ban, and this is formally recorded as a consequence of behaviour. Achievement targets for developing individual skills and managing behaviours are set with the young people. Points are awarded to young people on a daily basis and accumulated to provide young people with a reward at the end of the week. Young people speak positively about the benefits of working towards their targets. The young people are presented in an assembly at the end of each week that recognises their individual achievements. There are excellent methods of dealing with behaviour issues within the boarding house that are clearly documented.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The residential provision, activities and care staff actively contribute to the educational progress that young people make at the school. Care staff are familiar with the educational needs and progress of the young people in their care. One staff member wrote 'Regular contact and discussions are held between care and education staff to ensure knowledge of pupils and future plans are communicated.' They also contribute to their annual reviews. Staff reflect on a young person's day while in education during handover, which ensures that staff are fully aware of any issues that may impact on the support required. Young people have the opportunity to spend time with their house parent to discuss any concerns regarding any aspect of their school life.

There are excellent relationships between staff and young people who board. Staff are sensitive and offer support to young people experiencing homesickness and other problems. From observations and comments from the young people, it is evident that staff provide a positive, nurturing and professional approach to working with the young people in their care.

Young people report that the activities when they are in residence are excellent and that there are activities everyday which they enjoy. One young person said 'It's fun, I've got my friends and there's always something to do here.' They are actively involved in planning activities and have a choice on a day-to-day basis dependant on their behaviour. Young people would not be allowed to take part in an activities if a risk was highlighted following poor behaviour during the day. In these cases activities in the boarding house are supported by staff. Young people also benefit from using the school grounds and outdoor recreational areas for evening activities throughout the year. They speak extremely positively about the activities that they are able to participate in while staying at the boarding house, which keep them active.

Young people have recently formed a Scout troop and a Scout Investiture took place during the inspection. The boys are enjoying being members of the scouts and have took part in many activities and undertaken badge work. Some boys attend the army cadets and another the local golf range.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are encouraged and supported by the care staff to make decisions about their lives. They say that they are consulted about issues and are encouraged to share their ideas and comments. They are provided with good choices, for example, at meal times and in the range of activities that they can undertake. The school council meets regularly and is attended by the head teacher and the head of care. Minutes demonstrate that boarding issues are discussed regularly and acted upon.

Young people's needs are assessed and written plans outline how these are to be met. The information in place about specific aspects of care of the young people ensures that staff have a consistent approach. The plans contain targets that are regularly evaluated and updated on a regular basis. Information clearly demonstrates that planning for young people who board is of an excellent standard with a consistent approach towards the positive development of the young person in a holistic manner.

New boarders benefit from a sensitive admission process that helps them to become familiar with the staff, boarders and daily routines. Following assessments and discussions with parents, young people are introduced to the boarding house in a phased and supported manner. Leaving processes are well planned and tailored to individual boarders. There is a leavers festival, which the young people all look forward to.

Young people are encouraged to maintain contact with their families if they choose to while staying at the boarding house. They have a phone card for their personal use and confirm they may contact parents in private without the permission of staff. Parents are invited to open days and special events, like the Scout Investiture night and the Christmas cake displays. Staff maintain good regular contact with parents and carers with regard to young people's progress as well as concerns.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

The premises provide sufficient space and facilities to meet the needs of young people. Residential accommodation is decorated, maintained and furnished to a good standard. Children's bedrooms are well equipped, meeting the requirements of the national minimum standard. They are individually personalised with posters and photographs, which reflect young people's interests.

The boarding houses benefit from having good sized communal areas. Specifically, it has a pool room, a large and well equipped activity hall and a number of small rooms, which can be used for activities.

There are sufficient bathrooms and toilets to meet young people's needs. Young people said they liked their bedrooms.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. There is a warm community atmosphere where young people's differences are accepted and valued. There is evidence of the promotion and development of social inclusion and work with the young people to help them achieve their potential. There is an appropriate gender mix of staff within the boarding house.



There is relevant and clear information regarding the ethos of the school. There is a statement of the school's care principles and practice for young people who board. Parents receive a school prospectus, including the last inspection report, when visiting the school for the first time.

Staffing levels outside teaching time are sufficient for the number of boarders, the different age groups and the activities they are involved in. Each of the residential areas has an identifiable leading house parent. Young people are aware of who is on duty and who is responsible for them at specific times. The staff team are extremely positive in their approach to working with the young people and each other. They strive to achieve the very best for the young people in their care.

Boarders are looked after by experienced staff who understand their needs and work closely with them to help them to progress and achieve. The low turnover of staff provides the boarders with stability and promotes positive relationships. Staff confirm that they receive adequate supervision and there is easy access to senior staff for informal support. Training opportunities are made widely available to staff, including child protection, first aid and National Vocational Qualifications. Other courses relating to young people disabilities are also available for staff to enhance their knowledge in the subject area. One staff member wrote 'The huge selection of on-going training and development is very positive.'

Good systems are in place internally for the monitoring of boarders' welfare; for example the care administrator and the head teacher undertake visits to the boarding provision. However, the external monitoring by the trustees fails to meet the national minimum standards with regards to areas it monitors during their visits. The head teacher has delegated areas of responsibility to members of his senior staff team. The management team monitor documentation in the boarding house, such as restraints records. Regular team meetings ensure that all aspects of life in the school are discussed and monitored by the head teacher. The school's annual development plan addresses identified areas for development.

## 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 |
|----------|--------|----------|
|----------|--------|----------|

### Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- notify Ofsted promptly of all significant events relating to the protection of children (breach of national minimum standard 7)
- ensure the written half-termly monitoring report undertaken by the trustees covers all the areas within the National Minimum Standard 33. (breach of national minimum standard 33.3)