

Skilts School

Inspection report for residential special school

Unique reference number	SC033753
Inspection date	18 November 2009
Inspector	Martha Nethaway
Type of Inspection	Key

Address	Skilts School Gorcott Hill Beoley REDDITCH Worcestershire B98 9ET
Telephone number	01527 853851
Email	Tony.pridding@skilts.bham.sch.uk
Registered person	Birmingham City Council, Education Department
Head of care	Charles Herriotts (Head Teacher)
Head / Principal	Tony Pridding (Head of Boarding)
Date of last inspection	17 March 2009

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: 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

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

Skilts is a residential special school for boys of primary school age with emotional, social and behaviour difficulties and associated learning difficulties, operated by Birmingham City Council Children's Services. It is situated in the countryside just outside Redditch in Worcestershire, approximately five miles from the Birmingham boundary. The school is in the main, older building and there are two modern residential houses, each with two wings. They are Seal and Otter, Owl and Woodpecker.

It is open on weekdays and term time only. Residential pupils stay for anything up to four nights a week, depending on their needs. Children are usually placed at the school by Birmingham City Council and have usually experienced major difficulties in mainstream schools or other settings, and are likely to have experienced exclusion on either a temporary or permanent basis and therefore have had time out of regular school.

Of the current 62 children at Skilts, 27 use the overnight residential service at some time during each week, though only four were in residence on the first night of the inspection. Each child is assigned to one of four residential houses. All children report to the residential houses first thing in the morning; they can have breakfast if they want and start the school day from there, or eat lunch in one of the houses and go home from their house unit in taxis to their own homes.

Summary

This inspection is a key announced visit. The outcome groups for being healthy, staying safe, enjoy and achieve, positive contribution, economic well-being and organisation were examined. The recommendations set at the last inspection were also followed up as part of this visit. Children were observed interacting with staff. Discussions were held with children, staff and management.

The residential provision performs well across the aspects of care and educational curriculum. Children enjoy their time at the residence. Staff provide outstanding levels of engagement that guides children to be successful, confident and secure.

There are three recommendations set as a result of this inspection visit. These primarily relate to fire training and improving the records related to sanctions being applied and ensuring consistency with all recruitment checks.

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 the school was set five recommendations. The medication policy relating to the storage of medication has now been thoroughly addressed. The school has improved the recruitment process by ensuring that all staff files now contain clear evidence of what identity checks have been completed. The school has successfully appointed an independent visitor who will be a further person that children can talk to. The school has sought appropriate permission to use auditory alarms within the children's accommodation. Finally, all staff now

have in place an appropriate annual appraisal to review their work practice which is directly linked to identifying further training.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Staff continue to provide excellent support to meet the health needs of children. There is a clear rationale with respect to specialist services being accessed through the school. Staff recognise the importance of close working partnerships in care, health and education. For example, the school has a named nurse who provides a weekly clinic to monitor and review all of the children attending the school. Children's health needs are further addressed because the school has accomplished links with the child and adolescent mental health service. Children's health needs are clearly identified in the care plans with all medical information being sought prior to attending residency.

Children's health is further enhanced by the regular opportunities to participate in sporting activities. Children have access to a trained sports coach in residential and day aspects of school. One child commented, 'since I have been at the school I have learned to ride a bicycle and could not do that before.'

Children's medication is managed correctly and staff practice is consistent with the school's new guidance, policy and procedure. This ensures that medication is safely stored, dispensed and returned to the child's home at the end of each school holiday. Children are properly protected because staff provide a clear auditable trail of medication prescribed for each child. The nurse and senior staff monitor practice and audit records. Since the last inspection the school has increased the number of qualified first aiders who are available across the school and residences. This means that children receive immediate assistance if they become injured or ill.

Children enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that provide a high quality diet. The catering teams prepare freshly cooked food from raw ingredients. Children have a choice at the main lunch and evening meal. The school can cater for specific dietary needs including offering a vegetarian option and halal food is always available. High quality school meals are provided and the school is achieving the right nutritional balance for growing children.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The system in place to promote the safety and welfare of children is good. There are minor shortfalls which relate to the school not correctly following its own internal staff recruitment procedures. Refresher fire safety training has not been provided for all residential staff. Also the bound book to record sanctions is not correct and does not adequately explain the consequence and effectiveness of sanctions being applied. However, the combination of these areas do not directly affect the good outcomes that the school achieves with children. This is because the school has in place thorough practice and policies to address child protection, safeguarding, complaints, counteracting bullying, being absent without authority, behaviour management and health and safety.

The school has in place good systems and structures to maintain safe practices and fulfil health and safety obligations. Risk assessments for the premises and activities successfully detail how

staff manage risks. Since the last inspection, the school has improved the physical security of the school with new gated access and safer entry doors. All children have a personalised risk assessment that is regularly reviewed in light of changing circumstances. Children are participating in fire evacuations and they clearly know what steps to take in an emergency. There is a minor shortfall with not all staff attending refresher fire training. This could potentially compromise the school's good system for fire safety and prevention.

The school has in place an effective complaints system which is known to the children, parents and significant stakeholders. Staff welcome feedback when they get things wrong and show a strong capacity to resolve concerns and improve systems and practices at the school.

The school provides a positive environment where children have opportunity to talk, express their concerns and are listened to. Children's welfare is protected because the staff are suitably trained in child protection and safeguarding. The designated lead for child protection has attended advanced training with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. This clearly demonstrates that their professional knowledge and skill in the field of child protection has been updated. Since the last inspection there has been one child protection incident which is currently being dealt with. The school has been helpful with all points of the investigation.

The school has an excellent process in place to clearly identify children that are causing concern which are identified by staff. The school provides focused support which includes advice, support and training which delivers better outcomes for children.

The school is forward thinking in terms of how it promotes an anti-bullying environment. Children clearly understand that bullying behaviours are totally unacceptable and that incidents will be addressed. There are excellent initiatives used to foster a school community that is safe. Children comment, 'they regularly participate in anti-bullying events and the schools takes any form of bullying seriously.'

Children clearly understand how staff help them to improve and modify their behaviours positively so that they can maximise their opportunities. Staff are very effective and help children to control their impulsive behaviour and this is achieved by the use of a positive and achievable rewards scheme. This is designed to celebrate children's achievement resulting in them receiving a 'star' and a certificate award. All of the staff receive accredited training to manage physical intervention safely. Staff do occasionally apply sanctions but these are proportionate and fairly applied. There is a small shortfall with the bound and numbered book which does not adequately explain the effectiveness and consequence of a sanction given. As a result, the school is not keeping a correct and accurate record.

The school has in place an adequate vetting and selection policy and procedure. The leadership team ensure that staff employed at the school are deemed suitable to work with children. All staff have had a Criminal Record Bureau check. The majority of the files checked demonstrate suitable checks being made. However, there was one file that did not correctly follow all the required checks of the school's policy. As a result, the school has compromised its good procedures for safe recruitment.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are provided with excellent support which has a positive impact on children's development. Staff provide a holistic environment with a positive educational and residential experience. Staff encourage children in all aspects of their lives and staff act as inspiring role models for children. This ensures they develop socially, and successfully engage in residency life.

Children benefit from the excellent rapport with staff. This is evident from the commitment and enthusiasm that staff express for the well-being and welfare of children. Staff demonstrate in-depth knowledge about each child especially related to their care needs and educational ability. Staff successfully ensure that care plans are also linked to educational development areas. The residential environment includes facilities to support children's learning into the evenings.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Staff help children make an outstanding positive contribution to the school. They contribute effectively to the residency by the very active school council which meets regularly. They really value this forum and understand the purpose of these meetings. Children commented, 'that the school council represents the views of the children and gets things done.'

Children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes. Their needs are continually assessed and written plans clearly outline how these needs will be met. Children's care planning is well designed and clearly demonstrates a needs-based assessment approach being adopted by staff. Children participate in the formulation of the care plans with the targets being developed. Parents and carers are also involved in forming the care plans. Children clearly benefit from the clarity of direction and the focused approach to achieving their targets. All targets are integrated to help children succeed in their residency environment and at school.

Children's contact arrangements are clearly summarised in their care plans. Where it is appropriate, children are encouraged to maintain strong contact with their family and friends. All children can make and receive telephone calls in private. Staff recognise that good, regular and consistent contact has a positive impact for children to maintain a strong sense of identity.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Children are living in an environment that is cared for. The furniture, equipment and surroundings are well kept. This is attributed to the strong team of ancillary and maintenance staff who keep the boarding residency in a good clean state of repair. Children are able to personalise their rooms and they feel proud of their environment. For example, there are posters and personal items around the rooms. Children freely bring their personal possessions, such as hand-held computer games.

Children enjoy the pleasant rural setting that the school is within, including activities in the nearby woods.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit enormously from the outstanding support and care provided by the residential support staff. The school clearly demonstrates excellent arrangements for the day-to-day management of the residency boarding experience. The management team are strong, capable and deliver a clear vision for the school. They work seamlessly and there is a strong commitment and concern about progress and promoting the welfare of children. The Head of Care is also well qualified and shows a high level of commitment and passion for the role and the development of the children.

Children receive excellent quality care and support from an appropriately experienced and qualified staff team. All of the staff are qualified to National Vocational Qualification at level 3. Staff continue to attend in-house training to help them develop and improve their work practice. One manager commented, 'there is good communication and information sharing with staff and they are an organised group who know their job well.'

The school has a Statement of Purpose clearly describing what can be expected from the residential experience. The school is well staffed to meet the needs of the children, with staffing patterns being clear within the staffing policy.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding and there is a positive emphasis to value children's difference and treat others with respect. This is evidenced through different assemblies and school gatherings.

Staff are appropriately supported through a formalised supervision structure. Staff commented, 'we are well supported and the management team provide delegated responsibility for different roles across the residency.'

Systems within the school are highly effective and monitored by the senior management team. The school is visited on a half-termly basis by a member of the governing body and the report is made available. The governors and leadership team have a clear overview of residency strengths and needs, which ensures children are safe and receiving a high quality care experience.

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):

- ensure positive steps are taken related to providing fire training in accordance with fire legislation and guidance (NMS 26.1)
- ensure that all school systems for recruiting staff (including ancillary) who work with children in the school include all the elements outlined in Standard 27.2 (NMS 27.2)

- ensure a record of all sanctions applied is kept in accordance with Standard 10.9. (NMS 10.9)