

Wilds Lodge School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Joanne Vyas
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Address	Wilds Lodge School Stamford Road Oakham Rutland LE15 8QQ
Telephone number	01780 757254
Email	
Registered person	Wilds Lodge School
Head of care	Robin Lee
Head / Principal	Robin Lee
Date of last inspection	9 October 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

Wilds Lodge School is a residential and day school for boys aged between eight and 16 years with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. It currently provides boarding for 41 boys.

The school is set in 16 acres of woods, ponds, formal gardens and paddocks. It is surrounded on all sides by farmland. The town of Stamford is three miles away and Corby is approximately 20 minutes drive.

The boarding accommodation is divided into three areas within the main house. The Bungalow, the Lodge and the Loft. The Loft has been recently extended to provide more space for the older boys. The boys are divided into groups according to their age and vulnerability.

The school's boarding provision sets out to offer a 24-hour curriculum. It provides a safe, structured environment away from the distractions of difficulties that may exist within the family and the community.

Summary

The inspector visited this school to complete an announced full inspection where all the key standards were inspected.

There is a significant commitment to the emotional wellbeing of students and providing a therapeutic environment in which they can thrive. The staff team are highly skilled, caring, qualified and well supported by each other and a strong senior leadership team. They are passionate and committed to the work that they do. Staff are able to provide a high standard of care for students and meet their individual needs with the knowledge and understanding they have of them. Individual needs and aspirations are identified and plans are in place to address them. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding throughout the standards inspected. There are strong working relationships on behalf of the student across the school, to ensure that the student's needs are fully addressed and communication between teams is a strength. There are excellent relationships between the students and staff. The management of behaviour is also a strength where students are supported and encouraged to make the right decisions. A parent said simply, 'A superb school.'

However, some shortfalls have been identified where the school needs to improve in order to fully safeguard children. These include recruitment procedures although the school have already implemented changes, records of physical intervention and treatment given after an accident.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The principal, head of care and staff have made substantial progress in ensuring the recommendations made at the last inspection have been complied with. Medication procedures have significantly improved. Risk assessments for windows which present a risk to children or offer intruder access have been implemented. The placement plan, care plan and statement of educational need provide staff with the information they need in order to meet the day to day needs of the students. No formal complaints have been made to the school and therefore their

recording of such complaints could not be assessed but work has been carried out to ensure appropriate recording of such complaints. The school have devised a new central record to record all physical intervention which covers all the elements of national minimum standard 10.14. However, this book is not always fully completed.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are focussed and committed to ensuring a high quality provision for health care for all students. All students are registered with doctors, dentists and opticians, either locally to the school or to their home. When a student was asked what happens when they are poorly, he said, 'Keep us in bed and let us rest. They also keep an eye on us and give us medicine, then take us to the doctor.' There is a strong emphasis on the emotional wellbeing of students and providing a therapeutic environment in which they can thrive. To ensure commitment to this, the school employs a team of qualified counsellors and a visiting education psychologist who work closely with the care and education staff to provide emotional support to students as well as support and training for staff. Each student has a health plan that addresses the needs of students. All accidents are recorded and first aid is given as appropriate although treatment isn't always recorded. There is a high level of staff who are qualified in first aid and so there is always a member of staff on duty who is trained to give first aid.

The safe handling of medication is well managed in this school. The school use homely remedies, and these have been agreed with a doctor. Staff receive training in the safe handling of medication. Medication is accurately recorded, received and disposed of appropriately. The medication cupboards are secure.

Mealtimes are sociable occasions, where a variety of healthy food is served in ample quantities. All students agreed the food is lovely. They are given the opportunity to discuss and change menus as well as cook their own meals. A student said, 'If I don't want what is on the menu I can choose and cook for myself.'

None of the students have any special dietary needs or preferences but staff are able to cater for special diets when required. Theme days are held throughout the year to celebrate events from different cultures and beliefs such as Moroccan, Indian and Italian food, in order to support the theme the school are covering. Food is locally sourced and all cooked from fresh ingredients. When a student was asked about if he gets enough to eat and drink, he said, 'Yes loads.' The local environmental health department have visited recently with an excellent outcome and only one recommendation, which the school has now complied with.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Students feel safe living at this school. A student said when asked what is good about the school, 'Keeping us safe and lovely staff to talk to.' The safety and rights of both staff and students are protected. There are no ongoing safeguarding issues, but any such issues have been quickly referred to the appropriate external agencies with immediate action taken in order to keep students safe. A parent said, 'Safety is paramount at Wilds Lodge.' All staff, including domestic and maintenance staff, have received some basic child protection training which forms part of the school's internal core staff training programme. Staff are competent in their knowledge of the school's child protection procedures and know how to safeguard students.

Some students have experienced incidents of bullying but staff are pro-active and responsive to all bullying behaviour. The high staffing levels, vigilance and working practices adopted by the school go some way to reducing opportunities for bullying to occur. For example, staff work with students to develop their understanding of the diversity of their community and the importance of tolerance of others within twice daily house meetings and personal support worker meetings. Observations of practice supported this work taking place. A student said, 'Yes I have been bullied and seen others getting bullied and the staff have done well in separating the problems of the children and making their relationship better between them.' Another said, 'Wilds Lodge don't let bullying happen.' The school has a written procedure for action when students are absent without authority. There are no incidents of absconding from the school but staff are competent in their knowledge of the procedures. All visitors sign into the school and must show identification.

The privacy of students is respected by staff. A parent said, 'Staff observe confidentiality rules.' The living arrangements provide space where they can relax and easily find privacy away from others if they wish. Sensitive information is held securely. Student's issues are not discussed openly.

Students are empowered to make complaints. A student said that if are unhappy they would, 'Talk to the carers and if I can't I'll talk to the teachers or other people on the premises.' The school has an active school council where students can air their concerns. No formal complaints have been made by parents or students but minor concerns have been dealt with immediately and appropriately.

There is a positive family atmosphere in each of the three houses. Behaviour management is a strength of this school. There are clear and consistent rules and boundaries which students are supported to understand. A student said, 'I think the rules in Wilds Lodge are fair and disciplined and so they teach us the difference between right and wrong.' House meetings provide a daily forum for staff to support students with managing their behaviour, encouraging them to take responsibility for their actions and look at ways they can improve in a supported and therapeutic environment. All achievement is celebrated no matter how small and poor behaviour is not punished but understood and reflected on. Students set their own targets for the day, which all staff are aware of. A member of staff said, 'The boys have a sense of pride when they achieve their target'. Students embrace this system with enthusiasm and substantial progress can be seen in each of the house groups as the students move through the school. Staff are given training during their induction on physical intervention and this is updated regularly. Physical intervention is used as a last resort and is carried out appropriately and only to ensure the safety of students and staff. It is rigorously monitored and staff diligently look for alternative solutions to physical intervention. Risk assessments are in place for students covering their activities and behaviour. Boundaries between staff and students are clear and relationships are excellent.

Recruitment procedures have not always been followed which potentially put students at risk of harm. However, the recruitment policy was reviewed in September 2009 and has been diligently followed since ensuring that all safety checks are completed and staff only commence employment when they have a satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure and two satisfactory references. Additionally, references do not specifically ask about the suitability of the applicant to work with children, they refer to young adults, which is inappropriate and misleading.

The school has comprehensive risk assessments for all aspects of safety of the premises and grounds including fire. All staff are given fire safety training and students know what to do when the fire alarm sounds. Fire drills are carried out on a regular basis and at different times of the day. Fire safety equipment is checked regularly and a detailed record kept. Health and safety procedures are robust.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are positive in their approach to education and its value for students. Communication between care, therapy and teaching staff is another strength of this school. All staff meet regularly to ensure a consistent approach towards students. They also meet at the beginning and end of each day to provide feed back about each student sometimes within the house meetings, celebrating achievement with students and supporting them when things haven't gone so well. Students are working well at the school and look forward to attending. Appropriate educational documentation is held on individual case files. There is a child centred approach to care and education. A student said of what Wilds Lodge is good at doing, 'Helping with work and listening.' Another student said, 'Making me laugh.'

Individual support is clearly identified in each student's file and observations and discussions with staff demonstrate that staff ensure each student's individual needs are fully addressed. This includes identifying any religious and cultural needs a student may have. The aspirations of students are well documented and encouraged. The work students have produced in school is displayed around the houses.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are able to provide a high standard of care for students and meet their individual needs with the knowledge and understanding they have of them. Student's files include a good health care plan and targets which are linked directly to the objectives set out in the statement of educational need (SEN). Targets are reviewed each term by students, their parents, teachers and care staff. A parent said, 'We have regular reviews. Care staff speak to us on the phone and when we go to school.'

There are strong relationships between the school and parents. Staff keep in regular contact with parents to ensure they are fully informed of their child's progress. A parent said, 'Excellent communication. They build the links with school and home very well.' Parents are invited to all review meetings and events held at the school such as sports day. Staff said this is extremely well attended. The school also provide an annual magazine detailing the events and celebrations of the year.

Admission to boarding and leaving is sensitively and comprehensively planned. The school provide comprehensive information to parents and students about the school before they arrive. Students are supported to attend colleges and work experience. They are also encouraged to carry out life skills such as making their bed, washing their clothes and cooking a meal, dependent on their age.

House meetings are pivotal to ensuring a therapeutic approach and providing a forum in which students can feel safe and secure. Students are encouraged and supported by highly skilled

staff to set a target at the beginning of the day which they feel will help them manage their behaviour and then in the evening they review their target. Staff guide students towards setting targets which they can achieve but will also help them progress. Students are also encouraged to support each other with any observations they may have about how well a student has achieved their target. There is an active school council and students are well aware of plans for the school. They also discuss with staff how house funds should be spent and what activities they'd like to participate in. Students are fully supported and encouraged to make decisions within the school.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

This is a beautiful school set in wonderful grounds that are maintained to a high standard. Students live in a homely environment, with high quality furnishings. There is ample communal space. The students have fabulous facilities within the houses and regularly access community facilities. Their bedrooms are highly personalised and age appropriate. There are many examples of cultural choices around the houses. The school is spotlessly clean and tidy. The grounds offer play areas, landscaped grounds, a river, a vegetable plot and land for housing livestock such as chickens, ducks, geese and sheep. Students help to look after the animals and last year raised some ducklings. Staff and students alike are proud to be part of the school.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The statement of purpose is a comprehensive document and is reviewed on an annual basis. The commitment to promoting equality and diversity is explicit in this information. There are good staffing levels in each of the houses with senior staff on call. At night time there is one night staff and staff who sleep over night and are on call.

Staff training is fully supported by the school who actively encourage staff to develop professionally. All staff, including catering, domestic and maintenance staff, are encouraged to participate in all training such as physical intervention, child protection, fire safety and so on. The staff team are highly skilled, caring, qualified and well supported by each other and the senior leadership team. They are passionate and committed to the work that they do. All staff have received equality and diversity training in the last year.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding.

Evidence supports a consistent commitment to improving equality and diversity in practice. Students receive an individual service in the school which is designed to meet their personal needs. All staff have a strong knowledge of the students they are working with ensuring their needs are consistently addressed. Staff work in partnership with parents and carers to ensure a high quality service where the ethos is centred around meeting the individual needs and aspirations of students.

The school ensures the quality of care through continuous monitoring and evaluation of the service. All records are signed off by senior managers. Senior managers including the head of care regularly visit the houses and work with staff to monitor performance and ensure a high quality service. The annual development plan sets out the way in which the school wants to develop and how it will be achieved.

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 a written record is kept of all treatment and first aid given to children (NMS 14.20)
- ensure that the central record for physical intervention is fully completed (NMS 10.14)
- ensure the school's system for recruiting staff includes at least two references, including the most recent employer, with a reference request letter that specifically asks all referees to state any known reason why the person should not be employed to work with children and that there should be no material mis-statement or omission relevant to the suitability of the applicant (NMS 27.2)
- ensure that no staff members begin work at the school until satisfactory completion of all checks and receipt of references (NMS 27.7)