

Wolverdene Special School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Clare Davies
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Date of last inspection	21 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

Wolverdene is a local authority school within Hampshire catering for primary age children experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school provides mainly day placements, but 10 weekly residential placements are available for boys within 'The Lodge', which is a separate unit located within the school grounds. The Lodge accommodation consists of six single and two double rooms with shared facilities.

Summary

This inspection of the boarding provision was at short notice and took place at the same time as a monitoring visit of the school following safeguarding concerns reported at the last inspection in October 2008. The school still does not have adequate systems in place to safeguard the pupils. There are omissions in recruitment procedures, a lack of staff training and awareness on safeguarding procedures and a lack of monitoring of key records relating to the health, safety and wellbeing of all the children.

Boarders receive encouragement and support to enjoy a range of activities and achieve in social skills and independence. The trained and competent residential staff team provide good care to the children who clearly enjoy and value their boarding experience. Boarders feel secure and cared for by staff with whom they have developed some strong relationships.

The overall quality rating is inadequate.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

A recommendation was made at the last inspection in relation to the school's recruitment practices. There is some improvement in this area with the establishment of a single central register and key staff are now trained in safer recruitment but there remains some shortfalls. A recommendation to tighten and improve the recording relating to behaviour management in the main school has not been met.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

There are clear policies and procedures in place to support staff in meeting the health and medical needs of the boarders. Medication is stored securely, only prescribed medication provided from parents is held at The Lodge, this ensures that over the counter medication is not given to boarders unless specifically requested by parents. Residential staff are trained on the safe administration and recording of medication, this practice is regularly monitored by the senior staff at The Lodge. The staff keep parents informed of any injury, accident or illness, generally, if boarders are ill they go home. There are staff trained in first aid, though the school has not obtained written parental consent for the administration of first aid.

There are written protocols for managing specific health matters, these are very good documents involving children and their parents detailing how the staff will be supporting the child during their stay at The Lodge. The staff liaise with health professionals who visit the school and some who are based in the community. A therapist based at the school supports children with their emotional needs and is available to the staff for support and guidance in working with the

children. A social worker attached to the school also provides emotional support to children and parents through individual and group work. Physical activity and healthy eating are promoted well at The Lodge along with personal hygiene, appearance and self-esteem.

The children enjoy the food and can contribute to the menus. One main meal is offered in the evening with a sandwich alternative. Food is prepared and cooked in The Lodge by staff who are trained in food handling and hygiene. The menus reflect a balanced diet with fresh ingredients used. Mealtimes are a social occasion around a big table, where discussion is encouraged and positive social behaviour promoted. Children have the opportunity to try new foods when there is a themed meal relating to a topic they have been studying such as different countries, festivals and celebrations. Fresh food is not always labelled with an expiry date once opened, this practice is not in accordance with food handling and hygiene standards. The school has been awarded Healthy School status, the practice of rewarding children with sweets in school does not support the principles of healthy eating.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Safeguarding procedures are not robust throughout the school. Not all staff are aware of the child protection procedures to follow, a lack of training for all staff supports this failing. There has been training delivered to some school staff, and particularly the residential staff though there are limited records to support this. The designated person responsible for safeguarding has received training in the past though this has lapsed outside the timescale required by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. It is unclear across the school as to what is the current child protection policy and procedure, documents dated 2001 and 2004 are both referred to. Staff who work in The Lodge demonstrate a good awareness of safeguarding issues and are discreet in their support with personal care tasks to respect boarders' privacy. In addition to formal training, safeguarding is regularly discussed in The Lodge staff meetings and through regular supervision. The school has developed links with the local authority responsible for safeguarding and a social worker attached to the school provides guidance on such issues. Poor recruitment practices were noted at the last inspection. There has been some improvement in this area but the school still does not apply all aspects of safer recruitment to every member of staff.

Boarders and their parents have information on how to make a complaint if they are not satisfied. A leaflet and handbook for The Lodge provides details of who they can talk to and this includes external helplines. There are very good relationships amongst boarders and residential staff to support informal resolution before the need to access the complaints procedure. Records evidence that parents are regularly contacted by telephone and through a weekly diary to inform them about their child's week at The Lodge. Wolverdene School promotes anti-bullying behaviour through the classroom, whole school events and on an individual level. There are posters around the school raising the matter of bullying and The Lodge handbook for boarders states that it is not acceptable. Respect for one another is promoted to counter bullying, staff at The Lodge refers to respect, rights and responsibilities when talking with the boarders as a group in circle time and on an individual level through key work. The school addresses bullying behaviour through Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL), this also considers anger management and self-esteem where individual and group work is available to support children with these issues. Some children reported that there is bullying at the school and that staff sort it out if you tell them.

It is clear to the boarders and residential staff that any misbehaviour should be dealt with at the time by the adults involved, consequently school matters are dealt with during the school day and any issues after school are relevant to The Lodge. There is good communication between school and residential staff to provide a consistent response to the children, transition periods ensure that key information is handed over with an emphasis on reporting positive behaviour and achievements. The boarders are aware of the expectations of their behaviour and feel the sanctions are generally fair. The strength of relationships amongst boarders and residential staff is indicative that there are few incidents that have required any physical intervention. The Lodge maintains clear records of any sanctions and physical interventions and these are regularly monitored by the head of care and a visiting governor. Some children have a behaviour management plan to ensure staff across the school provide a consistent approach to support the child with addressing any negative behaviour. Most school staff have been trained in de-escalation techniques and physical intervention, all staff will be trained by the end of the summer term.

Records relating to behaviour management within the school are inadequate. Confidentiality of pupils involved in the use of the middle room is breached and records of physical interventions within the school are not always written within 24 hours. Records relating to the use of the middle room are inadequate and compromise safe working practices. There is insufficient monitoring of these records, the reviews that have occurred lack rigour.

Fire safety procedures are in place across the school and The Lodge. The Lodge has suitable detection systems in place and staff are trained in fire safety and awareness. Boarders and staff know what action to take in the event of the alarm being activated and have practised this. Risk assessments for activities and The Lodge building are in place, a designated member of staff has recently received training in health and safety matters.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There is excellent support for boarders' educational achievement by the boarding provision. Good communication between classroom and residential staff promotes consistency for boarders and the involvement of some classroom staff in The Lodge supports an integrated approach to their care and development. The staff support the children very well in developing social skills and working towards appropriate levels of independence. For example, boys are encouraged to keep their rooms tidy, pack a school bag with correct equipment or sports kit and simple chores such as laying and clearing the dining table. Activities support pupils with socialising, communicating and in their personal development. Residential staff contribute to education reviews and recognise and celebrate children's progress in the boarding provision alongside educational achievements. The selected star of the week has the privilege of choosing Wednesday's meal and a film for the group to watch. Star of the week at The Lodge is announced in the whole school assembly. Through praise, staff encourage boarders to develop their self-confidence and life skills towards greater independence.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

There are formal opportunities where pupils are consulted such as the School Council, boarders meetings and the annual review process. Informally views are gathered from boarders through daily circle time, mealtime discussions and on a more individual level with staff. The staff at

The Lodge promote the importance of 'responsibility' and 'respect' when talking with boarders. Boarders are encouraged to make daily choices with regards to their meals and activities.

Comprehensive placement plans cover all aspects of the boarders' care needs in conjunction with health and medical information. Placement plans and targets are shared with the boarders and their parents as appropriate and reviewed every term. Boarders are able to freely maintain contact with their families who are encouraged to telephone and visit. Staff at The Lodge develop and maintain excellent levels of contact with parents through home/school diaries, telephone calls and letters. A Positive Parenting Programme is offered to parents, enabling them to share experiences and receive support from the senior staff at The Lodge and the school social worker.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The accommodation is in good decorative order providing a homely feel with comfortable furniture. The boarders state that they like The Lodge and their bedrooms. The boys particularly like the many different play rooms that are well equipped for their activities.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

The boarding provision is well managed with competent staff who are committed to the welfare of the boarders. Safeguarding issues across the whole school are inconsistent and therefore inadequate for the safety and wellbeing of the pupils. There is a lack of monitoring relating to behaviour management and accident records.

Suitable information is available to parents and children about the boarding provision at Wolverdene School. The pupil handbook is a child-friendly document with good use of colour photographs and pictures. There are very good staffing levels at The Lodge and the small dedicated staff team receive support from classroom staff when there are shortages. This ensures continuity of care for boarders and the development of existing relationships.

Boarding staff are encouraged and supported to undertake appropriate training such as; Team Teach, child protection, health and safety, first aid and NVQ awards in caring for Children and Young People. Records of such training are insufficient with a lack of personal development plans. The head of care and senior residential staff member have achieved NVQ Level 4 in management and are trained to deliver a positive parenting programme. The residential staff feel very well supported in doing their job and meet formally with their line manager in addition to ad hoc discussions and weekly team meetings. The monitoring of records, happens regularly within The Lodge, this is not consistently applied across the school. Representatives of the governing body visit The Lodge regularly and provide written reports of their findings.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. There are policies and procedures in place to promote equality and diversity, this school promotes a range of faiths and celebrates difference in language, disability, religion, culture and ethnicity. Wolverdene School is involved in a global school partnership project with a school in Uganda. Teachers from Africa have visited and links are being developed with their schools exchanging correspondence and photographs.

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 parental consent is obtained for the school to administer first aid. (NMS 14)
- ensure that food stored in the fridge is suitably labelled in accordance with food handling and hygiene standards. (NMS 15)
- ensure that sweets are not used for rewards as daily behaviour management within the school.(NMS 15)
- ensure that the designated person for child protection receives refresher training every two years. (NMS 5)
- maintain records of staff training on child protection and safeguarding matters. (NMS 5)
- ensure that all staff are aware of the school's child protection policy and procedures. (NMS 5)
- ensure all staff have access to the current school policy on safeguarding.(NMS 5)
- ensure that all records of physical intervention are completed at the earliest opportunity and no later than 24 hours after the incident.(NMS 10)
- ensure that school records of behaviour management are not accessible to pupils and visitors. (NMS 10)
- ensure that the school's records of sanctions and physical intervention are reviewed to monitor any patterns in incidents. (NMS 10)
- ensure that the requirements of NMS 27 are applied to the recruitment of all staff. (NMS 27)
- maintain records of training for each member of staff in a personal development plan. (NMS 29)
- monitor and sign records as noted, in particular accidents and injuries. (NMS 32)