

Rowdeford School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Thomas Webber
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Date of last inspection	4 July 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

The school is a secondary (11 -16 years), co-educational, special school for pupils with complex learning disabilities. This includes pupils whose measured ability and attainment place them on either the moderate learning difficulties spectrum, or at the top end of the severe learning difficulties spectrum. Many pupils also have associated medical conditions and/or syndromes. All are considered to be 'socially vulnerable'. The school provides a boarding provision for up to 24 pupils of mixed gender. All pupils admitted to the school are subject to a Statement of Special Educational Needs. The subject of this report is to focus on the weekly residential care provision.

This school is situated in a Grade II listed Georgian house, set in 20 acres of parkland on the outskirts of a village.

Summary

This announced key inspection took place over three days, covering all of the Residential Special Schools' key standards. This forms part of the annual inspection programme to examine the standard of care provided to young people.

The care practices established by the school ensure that good to outstanding outcomes are achieved for young people, where an excellent standard of care is provided to them. This was endorsed by the questionnaires received prior to, and comments made during, the inspection by the young people, their parents/carers and other professionals.

The overall rating would have continued to be outstanding but for the deficiency in staying safe which also lowered the rating for organisation. The recruitment practices were found to be unsatisfactory as they were not being consistently adhered to and could have potentially put young people at risk.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The last inspection identified two recommendations. The recommendation regarding care staff qualifications is being suitably addressed. The recommendation about improved recording of complaints will be monitored at future inspections as no complaints have been received since the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people live in an environment where their health and emotional care needs are clearly met. Young people's health care needs are primarily the responsibility of their parents and they remain registered with their family doctor. However, young people can access the school's local doctor's surgery, if necessary. Usually their parents accompany them to any health care appointments, although staff support young people with these matters if their parents are unable to do so. The school maintains suitable records of all health care appointments and their outcomes. Medical consent forms are established for all young people and there are excellent

health care plans for those young people who have specific health care needs. This information is frequently reviewed and updated. Young people receive personal hygiene and sex education lessons within the school. Care staff also support young people in these areas on an individual and group basis.

Safe medication storage practices are maintained with all medication being kept securely in facilities in line with best practice. Robust systems are established for the receipt and administration of medication, including controlled drugs. Staff administer all medication to young people, with suitable records being maintained.

The school actively promotes healthy eating for young people. A satisfactory and varied five weekly rotating menu has been established in consultation with the young people. The menus provide them with choices or alternatives at all mealtimes and include meals from different cultures. A selection of fresh fruit is readily available to them on a daily basis. Photos of meals are on display by the main dining room to assist those young people who require a visual aid. Mealtimes within the residential units are conducted within a relaxed and congenial atmosphere. Young people commented positively about the quality and quantity of meals offered, stating that they receive plenty of food, the meals are nice and alternatives are always available.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The school actively promotes the rights of young people by ensuring that their privacy and dignity is respected. Staff knock on young people's bedroom doors before entering and suitable locks are fitted to all bathroom, shower and toilet doors. Opportunities are available for young people to meet with their families and visitors in private as well as being able to make and receive telephone calls. Clear policies and procedures are established regarding staff working with young people of the opposite sex. Staff are very aware and sensitive of the need to ensure that assistance with personal care for young people who require it is managed at all times with care, respect and consideration. All young people's information is kept secure and staff are aware of the issue relating to confidentiality.

Clear policies and procedures are established for dealing with all complaints. These procedures are referred to within the school's guide to boarding and are frequently raised at young people's house meetings. Copies of this procedure are also on display within each of the residential units, being in both written and boardmarker (symbols) formats. The process of making a complaint is clearly understood by young people and the school supports them to raise any issues of concern openly. Young people are confident in discussing any issues with a range of staff within the school as well as the independent visitor. Since the last inspection the school has received no complaints relating to boarders.

Young people live in an environment where their welfare is promoted and they are protected from abuse. Staff have a good understanding of the needs of the young people and how to safeguard them. Comprehensive policies and procedures are established in respect to child protection including having access to the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. These are available to all staff who also receive child protection awareness training together with ongoing refresher training. The head and assistant head of care are the designated child protection coordinators for the school. Since the last inspection, two child protection referrals have been made which do not relate to the boarding provision. However, detailed records are maintained and show that they have been appropriately referred and investigated.

An anti-bullying policy is established with all aspects of bullying being considered as unacceptable. Information on the school's anti-bullying policy and all other relevant information is prominently displayed within the residential units in an appropriate format. The issue of bullying is frequently discussed at boarders' house meetings so that they are aware of the procedures should they need to use them. Bullying is not seen as a particular area of concern and any incidents are promptly dealt with by staff. All incidents of bullying are also suitably recorded. A clear system is also established for the reporting and recording of any event where a young person goes absent without authority. Any absences would be suitably recorded with all relevant parties being informed. This policy was, however, updated during the inspection.

Young people continue to conduct themselves in an exemplary manner, being polite and well behaved. Staff assist young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour through encouragement and reinforcement of the school's rules and expectations. The school's behaviour policy focuses on positive behaviour with an appropriate balance being achieved between rewards and sanctions. There have only been a few incidents where sanctions have been applied with suitable records being maintained. There is no expectation that staff would use physical restraint as this method of control would only be used as a last resort. Although not all staff have received physical intervention training, there are always senior staff on duty who have received such training should it be necessary to be used. Suitable records are also maintained of any incidents of racial harassment and pupil exclusions.

Clear health and safety policies and procedures are established which ensure that staff and young people are appropriately safeguarded. The school takes positive steps to keep young people and staff safe from the risk of fire and other hazards in accordance with Health and Safety and Fire legislation and guidance. A tour of the premises identified no significant health and safety issues. Young people and staff regularly practise fire evacuation procedures and the various fire and health and safety records are kept up to date. Detailed risk assessments are carried out in respect to all activities undertaken by young people, to the building and with regard to young people where specific risks/concerns have been identified. These are regularly reviewed and updated where appropriate.

There are appropriate recruitment procedures in place to ensure that staff appointed are suitable to work with young people. However, the procedures are not fully complied with on each occasion and this means that the recruitment process is not always robust enough. Management was rectifying this during the inspection.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Good communication systems are established between the teaching and residential provisions to ensure that a cohesive approach is established. This enables care staff to contribute and participate in the educational progress of the young people and ensures that a holistic approach is undertaken. Educational staff commented very positively about the contribution that boarding staff make to young people's education. Teaching staff meet with key workers and vice versa to address any particular concerns regarding any young people. A summary of the young people's individual education plans is maintained on their files which are kept in the residential units. These list the statement objectives and targets of the young people and are reviewed annually. Care staff commented that good relationships exist between themselves and the

teaching staff. Work undertaken during the school day is encouraged and built on by the care staff, who also assist the young people with their homework.

The school provides young people with the opportunity to engage in an increased range of activities, from judo, football, go-karting, swimming and trampolining to participation in local community based activities such as a local youth club and music zone. After school clubs are established which are run by the teachers and teaching assistants. Trips out are also arranged for the young people. The school endeavours to support young people to maintain the hobbies and interests they had prior to their admission. The school actively encourages young people to take up hobbies whilst they are resident which they can continue to pursue once they have left the school. Photographs are displayed within the residential units which provide evidence of the wide range of activities undertaken by young people. A good balance is maintained between free time and organised activities.

One of the school's strengths is the support provided to individual young people as well as the entire school community. The individual needs of young people are clearly identified in the various plans established by the school. These enable staff to provide the necessary help, support and guidance young people require. The school will access additional, external support/input to meet the specific needs of young people. Young people also have access to an independent visitor who visits regularly and offers them the opportunity to discuss any issues affecting them.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are encouraged and supported to make decisions and contribute to and influence the way the residential units are run. They are given every opportunity to express their views and opinions through a range of forums. These include unit meetings and individual sessions with their key worker, as well as the opportunity to raise and discuss any issues on a day to day basis. An active school council continues to meet every term.

Young people live in a warm, welcoming, nurturing and supportive environment where positive and relaxed relationships exist between staff and young people. These relationships are based on mutual respect and understanding. Staff celebrate the progress, successes and achievements of young people and are very committed to the care of them. A friendly, caring and relaxed atmosphere has been created where young people can freely express their views about any issues which are listened to and acted on by staff. Staff undertake their duties in a caring, sensitive and professional manner and young people are relaxed and at ease in their company. Young people commented very positively about the care and support provided to them by the staff which is reiterated by their parents, educational staff and other professionals. The school works well with the young people's parents and other agencies to ensure that they are all kept informed of any incidents and progress made.

Young people's needs are assessed, and detailed individual placement plans/boarding contracts identify how their needs are met. These are supplemented by an individual care plan for each young person which sets out their specific goals/targets to be achieved. Young people's care plans are reviewed and updated as and when required. All young people are allocated a key worker with whom they meet regularly. Comprehensive records are maintained of young people's key worker sessions. Young people usually receive day provision at the school prior to being accepted as boarders. Young people receive an annual review which they attend together with

other interested parties. This review process considers the progress and whether the placement is still relevant.

Staff are fully committed to supporting young people to maintain contact with their families during the week either by phone or visits. However, young people's parents are advised to contact the school in advance to make arrangements before they visit. The school retains good lines of communication between itself and young people's family members/carers through the continued use of a home/school book. This ensures that all parties are kept informed about young people's wellbeing and progress. Young people have access to payphones which are sited in each of the residential units. However, it is acknowledged that some of these facilities are not particularly private and allow conversations to be overheard by those passing by. Parents/carers commented extremely positively about the care and services provided to the young people by the school. Parents/carers describe staff as being very approachable, knowledgeable and enthusiastic. They also feel that staff care for young people as individuals and that the young people benefit from the boarding provision.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people wear their school uniform during the school day prior to changing into their leisure wear for the evenings. The young people bring pocket money from home and each house has a record of this money. These records accurately reflect the deposits and withdrawals made by young people.

Most young people leaving the school move to other colleges or provisions. The school has a policy for young people leaving the school and supports them and their families in this process. This includes where possible going with young people to visit their next provision. All units actively promote appropriate life skills and encourage independent living. However, only one unit provides laundry facilities for the use of the young people and the school is aware of this deficiency. The school educational curriculum has devised a travel scheme to provide young people with the means to make them independent travellers and gain road safety and stranger danger awareness. The school's policy of encouraging the participation of young people in various local clubs is seen as providing further evidence of the school's support for independent living.

Young people live in one of the three units within the main school building which are maintained to a good standard, being clean, tidy and comfortable. Attention has been given to provide a warm and homely environment for young people. The units provide sufficient communal space to meet the individual and collective needs of the young people. Although not all young people are provided with their own individual bedrooms, young people are given the opportunity to personalise their bedrooms/individual spaces to their own tastes. The units also provide young people with sufficient bath, shower and toilet facilities and the doors are fitted with appropriate locks to promote their privacy and dignity. The school continues to make improvements to the accommodation to enhance the young people's living environment within the constraints of the building.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Diversity and equality are promoted very effectively in all aspects of the service.

A clear Statement of Purpose is established which accurately describes the level of service provided to young people. This has also been produced in a child friendly format. This, together with a copy of the school's Guide to Boarding, provides young people and their parents with clear information they need to know about the school. The school's Guide to Boarding has now been developed, in conjunction with young people, so that it is personalised for each new boarder and based on the individual units.

The school maintains the range of records required which are clear, comprehensive and detailed. Evidence is available to confirm that these records are monitored by both management and governors.

The school is committed to providing sufficient staff on duty throughout the day and night to meet the individual and collective needs of the young people. Each unit provides two care staff on duty throughout the waking day with one member of staff sleeping in each night. These staffing levels are supplemented by teaching assistants who provide after school activities. Management cover is always readily available throughout the day and night. The school continues to provide young people with continuity and consistency of care with little staff turnover.

All new staff are provided with a thorough induction programme and they are also supported and encouraged to update their knowledge and skill base by attending a range of training. In-house specialist training for care staff is ongoing to ensure that they are competent to meet the changing needs of the young people being accommodated as boarders. Care staff commented very positively about training opportunities available to them.

Young people are looked after by a staff team who are themselves properly managed and supported in safeguarding and promoting their welfare. Effective systems have been established to ensure good communication is maintained between different staff disciplines within the school and to ensure that young people receive consistency of care. Weekly care staff meetings and daily handover meetings are held to ensure that staff are kept up to date with regard to all issues pertaining to their individual units and the young people. An 'open door policy' is established within the school to ensure that staff receive appropriate levels of supervision. Annual appraisals and formal supervision is provided to staff at the recommended intervals.

Young people are looked after by a staff team who are competent and experienced to meet their needs. The school is strongly committed to ensuring that the target of at least 80% of the care staff team are qualified in the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 in the Care of Children and Young People. Currently, 70% of the care staff are qualified, with another two due to complete this qualification by December 2009, which will mean that the school will exceed the recommended level by this date.

Very strong leadership and clear lines of accountability are established throughout the staffing structure of the school. The Headteacher is supported by a strong management team. Staff are very committed to providing the best level of care and support to young people to ensure that the very best outcomes are achieved for them. Staff are valued, their opinions are listened to and the staff team feel very well supported by all concerned.

The governing body ensures that the care and welfare of the young people within the school's boarding provision is continually monitored. Unannounced visits are carried out every half term by a governor and reports are produced outlining the visit and any action needed to improve the outcomes for young people. The Headteacher and Head of Care also produce separate reports each year which outline the review of the operation of the school, including the welfare provision for boarders.

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 all relevant staff recruitment checks are obtained prior to staff commencing employment (NMS 27)