

Shenstone Lodge School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Andrew Hewston
Type of Inspection	Key

Address	Shenstone Lodge School Birmingham Road Shenstone Wood End LICHFIELD Staffordshire WS14 0LB
Telephone number	01543 480369
Email	
Registered person	Sandwell Local Education Authority
Head of care	
Head / Principal	
Date of last inspection	13 May 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

Shenstone Lodge School is a residential special school catering for boys who are experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties and may display behaviour associated with the Autistic Spectrum. There are currently 18 pupils on roll, 12 boarders and six day pupils.

The school is owned by Sandwell's Department of Long Life Learning and is situated in the village of Shenstone, which is within Staffordshire. The location of the school provides good access to local community services and facilities. The school is set in its own grounds. This consists of play areas in which a range of static play equipment has been installed, an animal enclosure, swimming pool and sports field. The residential provision is situated in a large country house and is spread over its three floors. The building has been extended in the past to provide staff rooms, offices, medical room and resource areas. The purpose built school is detached from the residential facilities.

Summary

This inspection was completed over a two day period with two inspectors. The inspection showed that the children receive a high level of care from appropriately trained staff. Some recording systems need to be developed further however to fully ensure the safety of the children.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The school has responded to the recommendations made at the last inspection although there are still some concerns that have not been fully completed. Although there has been an improvement in the cross referencing of measures of control, the sanctions recordings need development. Placement plans are now dated, but need development in their content. Supervisions are now taking place on a regular basis and staff state that these are useful. Monthly monitoring is being completed appropriately.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are supported with a healthy lifestyle within the school. Children's records show specific health needs, and additional health records are available with the school nurse. Children are able to access appropriate health care services and staff support the young people with attendance of these.

Staff are appropriately trained in health and medication administration, and permissions are sought from parents with regard to medication. Medication is audited on a regular basis to ensure these are sufficiently kept. The school has a school nurse who attends on a regular basis, and works closely with other health professionals and families where required.

Children are provided with a good range of meals within the school. Meals are nutritious and children are part of the decision making in the development of menus. The cook provides specific diets, including those relating to cultural needs if required. A choice of foods is available at all meals. Mealtimes are pleasant sociable occasions which are enjoyed by the children.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people are kept safe within the school through effective systems and appropriately trained staff.

Children are afforded sufficient privacy within the residential area, although the shower area requires some development to fully ensure this. This is planned for. Records are stored giving sufficient privacy and children can also use the school's telephone in private where required. There is an additional payphone available for children within a semiprivate area. Children are able to meet with families within private areas around the residential unit.

The school has an appropriate complaints process, and this is known by the children as well as being sent home to parents. One complaint has been received by the school since the last inspection, and this has been appropriately responded to by the head teacher.

Children are kept safe within the school through robust systems and staff that are aware of their responsibilities in this area. All staff are trained in child protection and the head of care who has responsibilities for this area has had additional training. Child protection issues are well responded to by the school, although the school has raised concerns regarding how concerns are responded to by the local authority. Records relating to child protection concerns are well kept, with a clear chronology and detailed records of concerns and responses.

Staff within the school admit that bullying occasionally occurs, but this is responded to well by the staff team. Children state that they are not worried about bullying within the school and are able to talk about who they would turn to should such a situation arise. Bullying is discussed within school, and how this is not good behaviour.

The school has a good range of behaviour management systems in place including star charts and stickers. The children are very aware of the rewards that they can earn through the school day, and can discuss these. Challenging behaviours requiring restraint are responded to by trained staff. Some restraint recordings need additional clarity regarding the antecedence of the restraint, but there are no concerns regarding the specific restraints used.

Sanctions are occasionally used as a behaviour management tool. The records of these are not sufficiently clear and the recording mechanism is not in line with the expectations of the standard. Sanctions used are appropriate and children are aware of why sanctions are in place.

Health and safety checks are all completed in a timely fashion. All fire checks and drills are completed well although a number of the fire doors do not close into their rebates sufficiently.

The majority of staff records are well documented and show the school's commitment to safe recruitment. Some missing information is centrally held with the local authority and therefore not able to be inspected. The Head is aware of this issue and has raised this with the recruitment department. No concerning gaps are noted.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Excellent links are in place between the school and the residential provision. Care and teaching staff are in regular contact and all issues within these two areas are sufficiently communicated. Teaching staff are involved with the care provision in the evenings and care staff also offer some support within the school area, especially during periods such as homework. Pertinent information is shared between both areas when required. Education information such as statements of special education need are included within the children's files to support the schools awareness of the needs of the children.

The school provides a very good range of activities, including making full use of the swimming pool. Children are fully involved in choosing activities and these are well organised by the staff team. The school has a new gym since the last inspection, and children are positive about this area. The residential provision includes facilities that include a pool table, and games machines. Children are involved in play that is either structured or less formalised, with 'off the cuff' activities such as visiting the new pigs being enjoyed by the children. All activities are sufficiently staffed and risk assessed.

Staff are aware of children's individual needs and how to support these. Services such as CAMHS are accessible through the referral system, and records show that these are being used. Children's files show that staff have a high awareness of individual children's likes and dislikes, and these are responded to. The school has an independent visitor and there is evidence that they have been used productively by children at the school.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have an active input into issues that effect them within the school. These issues are seen to be raised primarily within key worker meetings which are well organised and well recorded. Decisions are also shared within the school morning meeting, with children able to state how they have chosen new play apparatus with a pirate ship theme. A home and school liaison care staff member works well to ensure that families have an input into issues regarding their child at school. They also visit children's families at home and support specific issues that have arisen during the time the child has been at the school. Residence at the school is from Monday to Friday, although the majority of children do not stay for the whole of the week. All children go either home or to carers at the weekends and holidays. Arrangements for contact of parents or carers by the children is within children's files.

Placement plans for children are basic and do not follow the expectations of the standard. The 'care and support' plans are good documents to inform staff of the child's wishes and feelings, but do not sufficiently assess children's needs and how these will be specifically met within residence at the school.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The accommodation provided to the children at the school is of a good standard and well looked after by both children and staff. All children enjoy having either their own rooms or sharing with a friend. Bedrooms are well personalised. Two bedrooms were assessed as possibly compromising children's privacy due to the fire doors being off these. The new 'flat' area is well designed and decorated, children are very proud of the area. The staff sleep-in area is sufficiently close to the children to allow difficulties to be responded to.

Communal areas for the children are also well looked after and well-personalised, often showing aspects of the school. Security arrangements for the school and residential block are appropriate and known by the children.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The school has a well written prospectus that covers all of the required areas of a statement of purpose. Parents are given a range of information with regard to the school in a format that is understandable to parents and placing social workers.

The residential provision is well staffed to meet the needs of the children that are in residence. The staff team ensure the children are well supported and supervised at all times while at school, including activities. Sufficient staff are available for the children during the night.

The staff state that they have been involved in a range of training courses, with all staff having completed basic training about the school and the needs of the children. Sufficient staff have completed training up to National Vocational Qualification Level 3. Staff receive regular supervision from the schools management team and state that they are happy with the support and sessions are productive.

The school's new head of care is appropriately qualified and experienced for the role. They are also involved with the monitoring of school records, with the head teacher and visiting governors.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff within the school work hard to ensure that young people's differing cultures are supported. The cook is responsive to individual needs of children and differing pictures around the school relate to a range of cultures. Staff are able to discuss how the team attempt to raise awareness of differing significant cultural days throughout the year.

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 all sanctions are fully recorded within an appropriate system (NMS 22.9)
- ensure all fire doors close appropriately into their rebates (NMS 26.1)
- ensure staff files contain all information as required by the standard (NMS 27.1)
- ensure placement plans are completed in line with the expectations of the standard (NMS 17.2).