

Springfield House School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Carole Moore
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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

Springfield House School is a Birmingham City Council Community Special School for pupils aged four to 11 with a range of special educational needs. The majority have social, emotional or behavioural difficulties; some have learning difficulties and some are diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorders. The school can accommodate 63 pupils and is open on weekdays and term time only.

The school is situated in a rural position near Knowle, Solihull and can accommodate children in the Lodge up to four nights a week. The residential provision can be a flexible arrangement based on an assessment of children's overall needs.

The purpose of Springfield House School is to provide a nurturing environment with firm boundaries in which children can rediscover their ability to learn and to enjoy and achieve.

Summary

This was an announced full inspection, which concentrated on the key residential special schools national minimum standards under the Every Child Matters outcome groups. All outcome groups were inspected.

The overall quality rating for this setting is judged as outstanding. Children receive outstanding quality care and support. Staff strive to provide a positive experience in relation to boarding life for children. The high profile of sport and leisure activities is a key strength of the school from the children's perspective. Children are actively encouraged to be sociable and help each other. Staff try to maintain productive links with families and carers and this partnership approach is well balanced to achieve the best outcomes for children. There is a strong integrated approach between the educational setting and the residential provision and staff are proud of the work that they do to make a difference.

Two recommendations have been raised as a result of this inspection but both have a low impact on the overall outcomes for children.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, it was recommended that the school ensure there is training for all staff, including ancillary staff, agency staff and volunteers, in the prevention and recognition of abuse and this has taken place.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children's health care needs are identified and assessed prior to admission. Staff gather a full and factual history from parents and carers and this clearly underpins the residential care plans for children. Parents and carers hold primary responsibility for meeting the health care needs as children have a flexible arrangement of overnight stays throughout the term. There are clear policies and procedures in place to support staff in meeting the health and medical needs of

the children in the Lodge. Medication is stored securely and only prescribed medication provided from parents is held at the Lodge. This ensures that over the counter medication is not given to children unless specifically requested by parents. Consent to administer first aid and medication is held on file and all staff are trained in first aid. Residential staff are trained in the safe administration and recording of medication and it has always been the policy that two staff members administer and sign the medication records. The Head of Care is obtaining a separate cabinet for the storage of the controlled drugs that the school now administer; however, there is not a separate log for the controlled drugs. A separate log is in line with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society guidelines for the handling of medicines in social care.

Children's health needs are managed well by the on site, part time school nurse and there are excellent systems in place to ensure there is effective communication between the residential staff and the school nurse. A strength of the school is the regular multi disciplinary meetings that take place to discuss the health and emotional needs of the children and to ensure they have access to the necessary therapist or mental health service they require. The school have on site therapists who know the children well and the consultant psychiatrist is a frequent visitor to the school.

The children enjoy the food and can have a say about what they eat. 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 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.

Children develop an excellent understanding of healthier lifestyles through the plentiful opportunities for them to participate in sports and outdoor activities.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The system in place to promote the safety and welfare of children is outstanding. This is because there are a good range of policies that address child protection, safeguarding, complaints, counteracting bullying, absconding, behaviour management and staff recruitment which are effectively implemented in practice.

There are good procedures in place to respond to child protection concerns and the school has established links with the local safeguarding team. The senior management team have recently attended advanced child protection and safeguarding training. Residential care staff are fully aware of their level of responsibility to report and act on any concerns related to children's welfare. This staff group including all ancillary staff receive basic child protection and safeguarding training so that they can fulfil their safeguarding role.

The school has good risk assessments in place for the premises, grounds and activities. These are periodically reviewed in light of changing circumstances. Children have a personalised risk assessment that discusses their unique needs and areas of vulnerability. Staff ensure that fire safety is given a good priority with regular fire drills taking place and fire safety checks being completed.

The school has policies that address the management of confidentiality and protecting privacy. Children's rights are well respected and staff communicate this effectively. Children have access to a phone for their personal use. Children are encouraged to develop skills related to their personal care and hygiene routines. They take pride in their appearance and are neat and tidy which contributes positively to their self-image and self-esteem.

Children are well informed about how they can make a complaint. The complaints procedure is child-friendly and accessible. For example, the new welcome pack ensures all children have equal access to concerns raised about any aspect of their care or experiences. Staff maintain an informal complaints log named 'grumbles, suggestions and comments' in each of the residential lounges. The new independent visitor is another form of communication for the child. Records demonstrate staff actively look to resolve any informal complaints promptly. Since the last inspection, Ofsted have received no complaints about the residential provision.

The school has a strong profile in relation to the promotion of anti-bullying and children have said very clearly that 'I feel really safe.' There are low levels of bullying and pupils feel confident that staff will sort it out. Counteracting bullying is addressed in the procedures and in the welcome pack and there are reminders around the school and the Lodge about the expected code of conduct.

Children know and understand what staff expect in relation to their behaviours. Relationships are clearly respectful, cordial and harmonious. Staff work hard to establish positive relationships. They encourage children to learn appropriate ways in which to manage their emotions and cope with day-to-day life experiences. All staff are trained to use physical intervention and there are clear recording systems in place to monitor all incidents. This is then further audited by senior management to identify any trends or patterns of behaviour and ways in which staff can support the behaviour and look at differing ways to manage it.

The school has in place a good vetting and selection policy and procedure. The school ensure that staff employed at the home are deemed suitable to work with vulnerable children. All the necessary checks are completed including an enhanced Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) check. The most recent independent visitor has returned to work in the Lodge and written references were not taken up. However this has a low impact on the outcome of safety as the visitor is known to the school, criminal record checks are in place and proof of identity is also on file.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There is excellent support for children's educational achievement in the broadest sense and all children are encouraged in a variety of educational, community and leisure opportunities. Good communication between classroom and residential staff promotes consistency for children and the involvement of residential staff within school 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, children are encouraged to keep their rooms tidy and do 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 residential provision alongside educational achievements. Through praise, staff encourage children to develop their self-confidence and life skills towards greater independence. Children have clearly stated, 'I want to sleep all week at school.'

Children receive inspiring individualised assistance, with the appropriate assessments and plans in place. Staff provide a child-orientated environment where learning and taking part is exciting and enjoyable. An outside professional voiced that 'The school have a staff group that promotes a healthy environment where children are firmly at the centre.' The overwhelming benefit of this approach is that children's participation in positive recreational experiences successfully contributes to their physical, social and spiritual growth and development.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

There are formal opportunities where pupils are consulted such as the children's meetings and the review process. Informally views are gathered from children through mealtime discussions and on a more individual level with staff. Children are encouraged to make daily choices with regards to their meals and activities. The staff promote the importance of 'responsibility' and 'respect' when talking with them.

Comprehensive residence plans cover all aspects of the children's care needs in conjunction with health and medical information. Residence plans and targets are shared with the children and their parents as appropriate and reviewed every term. Children are able to freely maintain contact with their families who are encouraged to telephone and visit. A positive programme of support is offered to parents, enabling them to share experiences and receive support from the staff at the Lodge and the Malachi Trust workers who work in partnership with the school. Parents are fulsome in their praise of the school and commented on the good levels of home-school support, effective communication and the improvements they see in their child's overall progress.

Children and young people are able to move into the school in a planned and sensitive manner. There is a designated senior member of staff who provides very specific support and guidance about planned admissions and new pupils are now visited at home. Staff ensure a pre-admission and assessment of need is completed prior to any placement consideration. There is equal importance given to those children who are moving on to new schools and key staff support the child through this process.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Children reside and learn in a fully inclusive environment which truly inspires them to respect and value their own needs and the differing needs of others. The standard of accommodation is good, providing a comfortable place for children which assists them with domestic style living. Children are encouraged to decorate their bedrooms with family photos and other items which reflect individual interests and preferences. Children display high levels of confidence in the staff's care as time, space and resources are used with great success.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children flourish as they are cared for by an exceptionally organised, committed management and staff group who are dedicated to providing care of the highest quality. The children have information about what they can expect which includes a welcome pack explaining how they

will be cared for. Parents have a clear statement on how the Lodge operates. Consequently, all parties are well informed about the running of the school.

Children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children’s welfare. Staff have great confidence in the people who manage them and managers value the staff. Professional supervision is well established and effective. Regular staff meetings involving all staff, ensure consistency of approach and a professional working partnership. The Head of Care continues to provide good leadership and is actively involved in the day-to-day running of the residential provision. His hands-on approach is a positive aspect of the school. The management of the school and the Lodge clearly work in harmony and, along with the staff team share a positive practical vision for the children who attend the school.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Children are supported by a professional and well-informed team who successfully familiarise themselves with research, information and ensuring records demonstrate the work that is carried out within the residential unit. Pupils are receiving an individual service in the school which is designed to meet their overall personal needs.

Children and staff enjoy the stability of an efficiently run school. Systems for monitoring the operation of the residential school are excellent, and the school has an atmosphere of creative and focused direction with children's welfare clearly at the forefront. This was confirmed by a child who voiced that 'Springfield is good at everything.' The board of governors play an active role in the monitoring of the Lodge and the quality assurance function captures children's overall experiences and highlights any areas for improvement. These visits provide excellent additional safeguarding mechanisms for pupils by looking at staff and management practices.

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 the school's system for recruiting volunteers includes at least two written references (NMS27.2)
- ensure there is a policy and written guidance, implemented in practice for administering and storing medication, particularly controlled drugs.(NMS14.17)