

Notton House School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Thomas Webber
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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

Notton House School is a well-established residential special school which provides residential accommodation and education for up to 60 boys aged nine to 16 with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. All young people referred to the school have a statement of special educational needs. The school is owned and operated by Bristol City Council.

The school is situated in a rural area of Wiltshire, close to the market town of Chippenham with easy access to the mainline railway and motorway.

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 overall good standard of care is provided to young people. This is endorsed by comments made by young people and staff as well as observations made and records seen.

Recommendations made during this inspection relate to administrative improvements within the recording systems adopted by the school.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The five recommendations identified at the last inspection have been addressed. These relate to improvements concerning record keeping in relation to being absent without consent, sanction and physical intervention logs as well as the staff recruitment process and supervision of new staff.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people live in an environment where their emotional and health care needs are met. The occupational therapist also contributes to the welfare of young people by providing them with individual support to assist in developing their self-esteem and dealing with specific emotional and behaviour issues. Young people are supported to attend all health care appointments as and when required. Individual health care plans and medical consent forms are established for all young people. Lessons are provided in personal, social and health education and the school nurse delivers information to young people on personal relationships and the physical aspects of sexual relationships, drugs, alcohol and smoking. Support in these areas is also provided by the care staff.

Safe storage practices are maintained with all medication being kept securely in facilities in line with best practice. In light of new guidance particularly in relation to the recording and administration of medication, the school has reviewed its systems and practices. Appropriate

policies, procedures and systems are established for the receipt and disposal of unwanted medication. However, some deficiencies were evident in the recording of medication administered. Staff receive relevant training and administer all medication to young people.

The school actively supports young people to eat a healthy and balanced diet. The menus are prepared in consultation with the young people, primarily through the school council and are subsequently agreed by the affiliated city council. A satisfactory and varied four-weekly menu is established which caters for the preferences, cultural and dietary needs of young people. The menus provide young people with choices at all mealtimes and a selection of fresh fruit is readily available on a daily basis. The menus are now readily displayed within the upper and lower school. Food is plentiful and most young people commented positively about the quantity of food provided. Mealtimes are conducted within a relaxed, social and congenial atmosphere.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff actively promote the rights of young people by ensuring that their privacy and dignity are respected. All young people's information is kept secure and staff are clearly aware of the issues relating to confidentiality. The school provides staff with guidance on respecting young people's privacy and confidentiality which includes the sharing and recording of information within the school.

Clear policies and procedures are established for dealing with any complaints. Ofsted's contact details are readily displayed on each of the residential areas' notice boards. The school supports and promotes young people to raise any issues openly and the process of making a complaint is clearly understood by young people. Young people confirmed that they are able to raise any issues of concern with staff and these are taken seriously and dealt with appropriately. Records show that all complaints and concerns are suitably recorded, responded to and addressed without delay.

Young people live in a safe environment where their welfare is promoted and they are protected from abuse. Staff have a good understanding of the needs of young people and how to safeguard them. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place in respect to child protection. All staff have received child protection training. Information regarding this area of practice is covered in the staff handbook, together with a procedure for staff who may need to respond to an allegation or disclosure. The school has developed a good working relationship with the local child protection service as well as those in the affiliated city council. The headteacher and head of care are the child protection designators for the school and as a result take the lead role in any child protection issues. All concerns or potential child protection referrals are promptly raised and discussed with the appropriate agencies.

The school maintains a zero tolerance in respect to bullying. As a result, an anti-bullying policy is established which is conveyed to young people prior to admission. Young people are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying. Although staff and young people acknowledge that incidents of bullying do occur on occasions, these are promptly addressed by staff. The restorative approach is being used by the school to assist in this area. The school has an extremely well thought out, proactive approach to bullying with surveys being conducted each term involving all the young people and staff. These assist the school to ascertain the bullies and the bullied. The surveys also assist the school in determining whether progress is being

achieved in successfully addressing this specific issue. Young people commented that they feel safe at the school.

A robust system is established for the reporting and recording of any event where a young person goes absent without authority. The school responds appropriately to any absence to ensure the safe return of young people at the earliest opportunity. All absentees are recorded and monitored with all relevant parties being informed.

Staff assist young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour through encouragement and reinforcement of the school's rules and expectations. The school has clear policies and procedures regarding behaviour management and focuses on positive behaviour. The school operates a comprehensive points system to encourage positive behaviour which is used within both the educational and residential areas. All staff and young people have a clear understanding of this system. The continued input of the occupational therapist and the integration of the emotional literacy programme have made a significant impact on the behaviour of young people. Young people commented very positively about how the school has impacted upon them and helped to improve their behaviour.

The school has a 'timeout' room which is used to provide young people with space and time to calm down. Use of this room is strictly monitored and can only be used with the approval of a member of the senior management team. Staff are trained in the use of physical intervention and records are maintained where this method of control is used. The sanction and physical restraint logs are in the main being appropriately maintained.

The school has established clear health and safety policies and procedures to 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. No specific health and safety issues were identified during a tour of the premises. Young people and staff regularly practise fire evacuation procedures and the various health and safety and fire safety records are kept up to date.

There are appropriate recruitment procedures in place to ensure that staff appointed are suitable to work with young people. However, not all aspects of these procedures are consistently followed to ensure that staff are suitable before commencing employment. These relate to staff occasionally commencing employment before all references are obtained. There is clear evidence to show that the school had actively pursued requests for these references.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people primarily attend the school provision on site, although some attend college and work placements. The education and residential staff work closely together to ensure that a holistic approach is undertaken towards the care of young people and good communication systems are established between them. Daily verbal and written handover meetings are established to ensure a cohesive approach, so that residential staff can contribute and participate in the educational progress of young people. Where necessary, teaching staff meet with key workers and vice versa to address any particular concerns. All young people have a statement of special educational needs, and targets of the young people are reviewed annually. Work undertaken during the school day is encouraged and built on by the residential staff who also assist the young people with their homework. Good facilities are provided to young people to

undertake private study. Connexions advisors also visit the school and attend young people's reviews, particularly the transitional review for work experience.

The school provides young people with a wide range of activities where they are able to choose from several options each evening, which are monitored to ensure that they are age appropriate. Young people normally return home at weekends but a programme of weekend activities and outings is available for those who remain on site. The school also provides activity and outreach weekends as well as activities during some of the holidays to offer support to the young people and their parents or carers. Young people commented positively about the range of activities available. However, it was acknowledged that there is a greater range of activities available in the summer months. The school provides transport for young people which enables them to continue to attend the various clubs local to their homes.

The school provides individualised packages of care for young people providing help, support and guidance as required. Young people usually meet with their key workers on a regular basis. These sessions, together with the input of the occupational therapist linked with the emotional literacy programme ensure that young people receive the individual support they require.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people are encouraged and supported to make decisions and contribute to and influence the way the residential areas of the school are run. Young people are given every opportunity to express their views and opinions through a range of forums. These include regular house meetings, individual key worker and occupational therapist sessions as well as being able to raise and discuss any issues on a day-to-day basis. Young people are consulted on their care plans and reviews. An active and effective school council operates which meets regularly, seeking the views of other young people on issues under consideration. This forum continues to be instrumental in improving the range of facilities available to young people within the school.

Young people live in a nurturing, structured and supportive environment where clear boundaries exist. Positive and relaxed relationships exist between the staff and young people which are based on mutual respect and understanding. Residential staff celebrate the progress and achievements of young people and are very committed to the care of them. A warm, friendly and relaxed atmosphere has been created where young people can freely express their views about a range of issues and feel listened to by staff. Staff undertake their duties in a caring 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.

Young people are admitted to the school in a planned and sensitive manner. A comprehensive admissions process is established. Information regarding prospective placements is considered by the senior management team in the first instance. Introductory visits are made to the school by young people and their parents and carers following representatives from the school making home visits. Young people and their parents and carers are shown around the school and the decision to offer a place is dependent upon the young person's commitment and the ability of the school to meet their needs.

Young people's needs are assessed as part of the admissions process. Placement plans are established for young people. The school is currently undertaking a review of these to ensure

that a comprehensive document is established for young people which will identify how their needs are met on a day-to-day basis. Young people's placement plans will also be reviewed and updated in line with their changing needs. Young people are involved in the planning of their formal reviews and are expected to attend them. Parents and carers of young people and other relevant agencies are also fully involved in these reviews.

Staff are committed to supporting young people to maintain contact with their homes during the week. The school holds a number of parents' evenings throughout the year. The school ensures that good communication is maintained between themselves and young people's parents and carers. This is to ensure that parents and carers are kept fully informed of progress made by the young people as well as any incidents. Opportunities are available for young people to make and receive telephone calls to their parents and carers in private.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Most young people return to their own homes at weekends. Uniforms are supplied by the school with young people wearing their own choice of clothes out of school hours. The school will also, in certain circumstances, supply young people with casual clothing. Valuables are locked away at the request of young people. Young people's pocket money is also securely kept.

The school is set in a rural area of Wiltshire. Accommodation is divided between a modern, purpose-built lower school and the upper school, which is in the original manor house with young people living in one of seven residential areas.

The premises are maintained to a very good standard, being clean, tidy and comfortable. The accommodation is also decorated and furnished to a good standard. Attention has been given to creating a homely environment for the benefit of the young people. The limitations of the buildings mean that young people are accommodated within bedrooms which provide both single and shared facilities. However, due to the current numbers of young people accommodated, most are provided with their own bedroom. Suitable locks are fitted to the bedroom doors and young people are able to personalise their bedrooms and individual spaces to their personal tastes. Residential accommodation in the upper school is divided into five small areas, each clustered around a communal lounge and kitchen facilities.

The areas provide sufficient communal space together with good bath, shower and toilet facilities to meet the individual and collective needs and numbers of the young people accommodated. All these doors are fitted with appropriate locks to promote the privacy and dignity of young people. Some of the toilets are also fitted with auto lights so as to avoid dark spots.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Diversity and equality are promoted well in all aspects of the service. Policies and procedures relating to equal opportunities are well established. The school promotes diversity and tolerance taking into account the individual needs of young people.

A clear Statement of Purpose and young people's guide are produced which describe the level of residential provision young people can expect to receive and how they will be cared for. These documents also describe the aims, principles and ethos of the school. Young people and their parents and carers are provided with copies of these documents prior to admission.

The school is committed to providing sufficient staff on duty throughout the day and night to meet the individual and collective needs of young people. Higher staffing levels are provided within the lower school areas to meet the specific ethos and structure of this part of the school. Lower staffing levels are provided within the five areas of the upper school with only one member of staff on duty to meet the complex, individual and collective needs of the young people. Given the current number of young people accommodated in the upper school, the staffing levels are adequate. However, there are a further two members of staff on duty to provide assistance, where necessary, to cover all areas of the school. Staff turnover continues to be low. Agency staff are not used, with the school relying upon existing care staff and classroom assistants to cover for any short-term staff shortages. This ensures that consistency and continuity of care are maintained. Management cover is always readily available as well as providing an on-call system during the day and at night.

Young people receive the level of care and services they need by a staff team who are trained and competent to meet their needs. The head of care has considerable experience of working with young people and holds a relevant management qualification. He is supported by two deputy heads of care who also have a considerable number of years experience in the care of young people. New staff are provided with an in-depth induction programme and all care staff are also supported and encouraged to develop their expertise and knowledge by attending appropriate training. This includes some joint training days with educational staff. At least 76% of the residential staff team have achieved the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in the Care of Children and Young People. A further two members of staff are due to complete this qualification by July 2010 taking the numbers of qualified staff to 88%. This ensures that young people receive care from a sufficient number of qualified staff.

Young people are looked after by a staff team who are themselves properly managed and supported in safeguarding and promoting their welfare. Effective systems are established to ensure good communication is maintained between different staff disciplines within the school. These ensure that young people receive consistency of care. Regular staff meetings and daily handover meetings are held which enable staff to keep up to date with regard to all issues pertaining to the residential areas and young people. An open-door policy is established within the school where staff feel well supported. Staff appraisals and formal individual recorded supervision is provided to all staff at the recommended intervals.

Appointed governors undertake monitoring visits of the school once every half term. The majority of these visits are unannounced and a written report is produced. The report format now covers all the required elements.

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 suitable records are maintained for all medication administered (NMS 14.20)
- ensure that the recruitment process is consistently adhered to with regard to the receipt of written references before staff commence employment. (NMS 27.2)