

Moor House School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Sophie Wood
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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

Moor House School is situated in a pleasant residential area of Oxted in Surrey. All pupils possess varying degrees of speech and language difficulties and all are boarders. Boarding accommodation is situated over the first and second floor of the premises and dormitories separate boarders by age and gender. A team of residential care staff work closely with teachers and the therapy department to deliver a holistic package of care that maximises potential and independence. Set within large, well maintained grounds, the school offers a safe and secure physical environment, with good public transport links to nearby towns.

Summary

This key inspection was conducted over two days by one inspector. All of the key standards were inspected and the five recommendations made from last year's visit were followed up.

The school provides a safe and nurturing environment for pupils, whereby appropriate and balanced risk taking maximises independence and personal growth.

Staffing levels have increased and appropriate action has been taken in response to all of the previous recommendations. A further six have been made as a result of this visit, none of which directly impact upon pupil safety.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Five recommendations were made from the previous inspection. These related to: completing medication records accurately at all times; securing an alarm to the sick bay; the accurate completion of the restraint log; ensuring all pupils have a placement plan with regular key working meetings; and implementing personal development plans for all residential staff members.

Throughout the course of this visit, the school was able to demonstrate the appropriate action it has taken to meet these recommendations and to ensure the continued safety and well being of the pupils and staff.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Pupils benefit by having their health and medical needs thoroughly assessed and met. Good quality records show clear medical and health histories, known allergies and written parental consent for treatment. The majority of pupils are registered with the school GP who visits every week. Those remaining with their home address surgery are still able to obtain appointments should this be necessary whilst at school. Pupils can also visit the local surgery and see a male or female doctor as they wish. Additional local services, such as opticians and dentists, are readily accessed when necessary.

The school is currently purchasing agency nursing cover, following the retirement of the previous school nurse. A recruitment campaign is in place. This provision is supplemented with a nursing

assistant who has fulfilled this role for some years; the post holder demonstrates professionalism and competence. The standard of record keeping and quality of care provided continues to benefit the pupils. This is further enhanced by the school GP providing additional guidance, advice and support during this time.

Therapeutic provision is effectively delivered. This includes speech and language therapy, physiotherapy and occupational therapy. Where necessary, referrals are made to external health services and the school also provides counselling and psychotherapy.

Pupils' health and medical needs are further safeguarded through the training undertaken by the residential care team. This includes first aid, medication administration and epilepsy management. Specific medical care plans are in place for individual conditions. These offer clear instructions and are regularly reviewed.

Pupils are provided with healthy, nutritious meals and are actively encouraged to contribute to menu planning with the catering manager. Meals offer a good range of options and fresh fruit is readily available. The dining room has been redecorated and pupils are observed to be very comfortable at mealtimes. Discreet support is provided by staff where necessary and all of the pupils take turns with tidying their tables. The recently created café area may also be used to accommodate a small group of pupils at mealtimes who may be experiencing difficulty in sitting with a much larger group.

The catering team is suitably qualified and experienced; many individuals have worked at the school for a number of years. Good communication systems ensure allergies and special dietary requirements are known. Observation of the interaction between catering staff and pupils is very positive. Appropriate encouragement to try new foods is delivered in a friendly manner and older pupils in particular, enjoy chatting and joking with the staff.

Such interaction endorses the comments received by pupils, which include; 'it's easy to tell the catering team if you really don't like something' and 'they do listen and cook new things when you ask for them.'

Older pupils enjoy preparing their own snacks, drinks and sometimes evening meals through after school cookery clubs and also by having a kitchen in their common room building. The latest initiative within the domestic science department is a cookery competition based on a television programme, which many pupils have entered enthusiastically.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Pupils' privacy is protected through the implementation of clear policies and procedures. These relate to record keeping and sharing confidential information appropriately. Care staff demonstrate a good understanding of these. Aspects of physical privacy are compromised within the boarding provision. Currently some pupils enjoy greater privacy than others dependent upon their own individual sleeping arrangements.

Complaints policies and procedures are widely advertised to all parties. Records detail the date, nature, investigation process, outcome and whether the complainant was satisfied. The majority of pupils say they talk to staff members if they are unhappy about something. They confirm

this is usually all that is needed and do not need to use the procedure. A small number were not sure of the procedure when asked about it.

Robust safeguarding procedures provide good levels of protection for pupils. Every staff member receives child protection training which is refreshed annually. The headteacher is the lead child protection officer for the school and the safeguarding policy is congruent with the guidance of the local authority. Senior staff members have attended local authority child protection and safer recruitment training. There have been no child protection referrals made since the last inspection.

Pupils report low levels of bullying incidents and confirm that isolated incidents are well managed. Staff demonstrate a good awareness in terms of looking for potential patterns and trends and provide appropriate support for victims and perpetrators. Pupils have recently received guidance and information on cyberbullying, with a recent assembly dedicated to this topic. No notifications have been made to Ofsted since the last inspection and neither have there been any unauthorised absences.

Pupils are actively encouraged and rewarded for positive behaviour and conduct. This is reflected by good role modelling from the staff team. Although training has been provided for the care team in terms of the appropriate use of physical restraint techniques, instances of its usage remain very rare. Clear and accurate records demonstrate the appropriate use of sanctions; these are being applied in accordance with the school's guidance and every entry in the recording log is monitored by senior staff and the school's Standard 33 visitor.

Risk assessments regarding the premises and activities are detailed, specific and clear. Pupils are protected. External contractors and the police have been used in terms of security checks and fire drills are regularly practised. Records demonstrate that fire fighting equipment is routinely serviced and checked, however, the time taken to evacuate the premises is not always being recorded. Night time staffing levels have recently been increased. Maintenance checks with regards to gas and electrical appliances are up to date. Hot water supplies accessible to pupils are thermostatically controlled and the absence of radiator covers is supported by clear risk assessments.

The strict application of a robust recruitment procedure provides good protection to pupils. All staff members are rigorously vetted and Criminal Records Bureau checks are renewed every three years. New staff do not commence with their posts until all relevant checks are satisfactorily completed. This is demonstrated through the inspection of the recruitment records of the two most recent recruits. The new temporary bursar demonstrates competence in this area; through conducting a complete staff recruitment audit, historic gaps were identified and swift remedial action was taken.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The systems in place enable care staff to actively support and encourage pupils' educational aspirations and targets. Members of the teaching and care staff teams regularly share information on a formal and informal basis. Care staff assist pupils where necessary with the completion of homework and they know the educational targets of the pupils in their groups.

Overall, an excellent response was received from pupils and parents with regards to activity provision. On-site activities include various sports such as football, swimming, trampolining and basketball. The student council is currently canvassing pupils for ideas as to a winter sports day. Various after school clubs are provided by care and teaching staff, including arts and crafts, cookery, music and homework groups. Pupils also have access to the library outside of the school day.

Common room areas are suitably furnished in terms of each group's age and interests; toys and games, televisions, Sky, play stations, table tennis and music systems. External provision includes horse riding, army cadets and judo. Two pupils are currently planning a group activity of paint balling and are in the process of advertising this to their peers.

A small number of parents commented that too many activities are sports-led and that there is less interesting provision for older pupils.

Care plans and additional records clearly demonstrate how individual support needs are being effectively met. The school contracts the services of a counsellor and art psychotherapist; care plans detail how sensitive personal care issues are being discreetly met. Two independent listeners are available to pupils and their contact details are prominently displayed around the school.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

An active and enthusiastic school council meets on a fortnightly basis. This consists of a chair, vice chair and representatives of each Year group. Every member demonstrates a sound understanding of their individual and collective role. Recent discussions have focused on fund raising for Haiti, the decoration of common rooms and how to spend the winter sports day. Clear mechanisms are in place for pupils to make suggestions to their representatives and for the minutes of meetings to be distributed and explained. The majority of pupils spoken with commented favourably about this forum, however, a small number said they would like more opportunities to become involved with single specific ideas, of particular interest to them.

Assessment systems are firmly embedded. All pupils have a life skills plan, which is derived from the continuous assessment of individual strengths and needs. An effective multi-disciplinary approach captures input from all disciplines of staff, the pupil and parents/carers. Each pupil has a key worker from the care team, however, owing to the school's holistic approach, pupils enjoy the benefits of having a key team. This includes the key worker, tutors and therapists.

Goals and targets across education and life skills are set, monitored and evaluated through the annual review process and periodically in between. Good internal systems enable effective communication between members of the key teams. Hence, progress, issues and concerns are speedily shared to ensure appropriate action and intervention can be taken.

Within the residential provision individual care plans are in place for each pupil. These work in tandem with the life skills targets which are aimed at maximising independence in all areas. Individual pupil risk assessments are also in place. These are still being developed and the quality of content is variable. Each full-time care staff member is a key worker for five children and allocates an individual key working session bi-weekly for each pupil. Many positive comments

from parents include, 'my child is making great progress', 'I get regular updates' and 'she is really growing in confidence.'

Other comments include, 'I'm not sure who my child's key worker is' and 'my child doesn't get enough 1:1 attention.' Direct observation demonstrated good levels of supervision with care staff members readily available to provide individual support when needed. Records indicate that individual key sessions are occurring within the prescribed timescales, albeit individual pupils do sometimes say they don't want or need a session. Pupils confirmed that they would ask for a change of key worker if they weren't satisfied.

Many parents comment positively about communication methods; the use of home-school books is particularly valued and communication from the teaching staff is of a high standard. Many pupils have their own mobile phones which they can use outside of school time and they all have their own school email address. A small number of parents report difficulties in coming through the main telephone switchboard in the evenings. The school's communication policy has not been reviewed or updated for some time.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Pupils are able to change into their own clothes at the end of the school day. Personal items and requisites can be obtained through school provision and also by accessing the local area; pupils receive appropriate guidance in terms of using their pocket money. Older pupils are actively encouraged to use public transport to gain access to the wider community, subject to their life skills plan.

The school continues to improve upon its boarding accommodation. The building does not lend itself to meeting the national minimum standards, given its physical layout and structure. The majority of pupils continue to stay in large dormitories, however, these are brightly decorated, personalised by the occupants and cleaned to a very good standard.

Since the last inspection the school has managed to adapt some of the dormitories to create smaller rooms, including a number for single occupancy. Such bedrooms have been allocated to individual pupils based upon sound assessment processes, in response to meeting individual needs. Plans are currently being discussed at trustees/governors level in terms of major project works and capital investment to improve upon this aspect of service provision.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Written literature available to parents, pupils and placing authorities is specific and clear. The ethos of the school, its admissions criteria and the services it offers are accurately described.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. This is demonstrated through clear policies and procedures which are adhered to by staff. Additional needs arising from ethnic and religious backgrounds are documented and diversity is celebrated through food, assemblies and personal, health and social education (PHSE) lessons. There is a good gender mix within the residential care team, which enables personal care needs to be sensitively managed with carers of the pupil's choice.

Since the last inspection further progress has been made with regards to the school achieving 80% of its care staff holding or working towards the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 in childcare. The head of care is completing the NVQ 4 award.

The ancillary team is very stable, consisting of many long standing members of staff. The site manager lives on the premises and is readily available during the evenings for any domestic issues that may arise. The bursar has recently instigated regular formal meetings with key members of this team to ensure information is disseminated efficiently.

Training records show a good range of additional relevant training courses completed by the care team which includes, autism, fire safety, epilepsy management, behaviour management, report writing, medication administration, first aid and child protection.

Clear lines of accountability and responsibility are in place. Hence, staff know what is expected of them and all have received a clear induction period, whereby they have spent time with each department, attended relevant workshops and training, and been given the time to absorb policies and procedures, alongside the staff handbook.

Staff members receive ongoing supervision from their line managers, as does the head of care and headteacher. Personal development plans are in place, as well as an annual appraisal system.

Members of the governing body interviewed demonstrate a clear vision as to the overall management and proposed development of the school. Various sub-committees scrutinise areas covering finance, safeguarding and planned developments. Members of the board come from a wide variety of professional backgrounds and there is also parent representation.

Reports are routinely submitted to the governing body from the head of care and headteacher; the external Standard 33 visitor conducts visits in accordance with the national minimum standards and produces detailed reports which highlight areas for development and improvement. These are shared with the head of care, headteacher and governing body and appropriate action is taken in response.

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 pupils are aware of the complaint's procedure (NMS 4.1)
- ensure evacuation times are recorded within fire drill records on every occasion (NMS 26.6)
- consider the value of introducing additional consultation forums in order that more pupils are given a clear role to contribute to the overall operation of the school (NMS 2)

- ensure all parents know the name and contact details of their child's key worker and further develop individual risk assessments within care files (NMS 17)
- review the communications policy and canvass parents in terms of their preferred means of contact. Clarify the concerns raised about telephone difficulties and ensure key workers provide regular updates to parents (NMS 20)
- progress the refurbishment and development plans with regards to the boarding accommodation. (NMS 24.2)