

More House School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Gavin Thomas
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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

More House School is an independent Catholic school occupying a large self-contained site in a rural setting on the borders of Frensham Common, Surrey. It is open to boys of any faith, aged 9 to 16 with a developing sixth form available to post 16 boys. There are 12 aims which make up the school's mission statement.

The school provides individualised learning programmes for boys who have specific learning difficulties, dyslexia or some associated language based problems. These programmes are devised from a detailed, structured curriculum which incorporates a whole school approach.

Day places and full weekly boarding places are provided. Boarding facilities are split between the juniors in the Main House and the seniors in St Anthony's.

The Main House, located on the first floor of the main school building, is split into five dormitories. The largest accommodating nine boarders and the smallest accommodating two boarders.

More House is registered and inspected by Crested (The Council for the Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexic Pupils). It appears in the Crested category of 'SP' Schools. It is also a member of the Independent Schools' Association and the Boarding Schools' Association.

Summary

At this announced full inspection, all key standards were inspected. The provisions and outcomes for the boys are outstanding. Examples of these are also highlighted by the boys and parents who completed surveys.

The holistic approach to assessing and meeting the diverse needs of all boys is evident across the different remits of the school. The residential remit has very strong links with these remits and where appropriate, outreach is extended to support individual boys and their families. This is an example of a process which is greatly appreciated by those receiving the support and one which is evolving.

The school has produced a more sophisticated process for the recruitment of staff. This new system will improve current processes. The school acknowledges that the governing body needs to be more responsive towards their duties in providing written reports for their official visits to the school.

The boys thoroughly enjoy their experiences of boarding. The many advantages include well managed prep times, opportunities for social engagements, good use of school resources and flexible options for taking part in a wide selection of after school clubs. The varying types of support are adapted and tailored in accordance with individual's needs and abilities. The sixth form boys also respond positively towards the value of programmes which support their transition to further education or employment.

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 previous inspection the school was asked to improve the way in which recruitment checks are carried out. However, in light of this, the school has completely revised the process for recruiting new staff. This process is very comprehensive and clearly sets all stages of recruitment from advertising vacant posts through to offer of appointment. In order to ensure the effective management of appointing new staff, the headmaster is also adding extra measures for intervening if there are delays in obtaining suitability checks. The school is now clear about what guidance should be followed when appointing staff for different remits of the school. This clarity will ensure that the appointment of staff is within keeping of legislative guidance.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The school is well resourced for meeting the boys' holistic health care needs. In doing so, there are very strong links between specialist professionals employed directly by the school, parents and visiting professionals such as the General Practitioner. The boys' health needs are supported by a suitably qualified nurse who keeps abreast of practice and ensures that her continuous professional development is up to date. Health records including individual plans are comprehensive and where appropriate, include very clear procedural guidance and emergency kits for use off the school premises. This ensures prompt treatment for illnesses such as epilepsy, diabetes and allergies. Meticulous procedures are in place for the receipt, storage, dispensing and administration of medications, including controlled drugs.

The school is committed to ensuring that healthy foods are always served. This includes a wide selection of freshly prepared hot meals, a salad bar, vegetarian options, fresh fruits and desserts. The boys describe the food as 'tasty' with lots of healthy choices on a daily basis. Catering staff are suitably qualified and the management of catering provisions and record keeping is effective. The views of the staff, boys and parents are taken into account when planning menus. Outcomes of dietary surveys undertaken with the boys are presented in suitable formats for giving feedback.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The boys say that there are no concerns about their privacy or dignity and they welcome the flexible requests to share rooms. Ample space is provided for private discussions. For example, boys may meet the independent visitor in private if they so wish.

The school has received almost no complaints for some considerable time. Very minor matters are dealt with promptly and efficiently. The boys say they are aware of the complaints procedure and would not hesitate to speak to any member of staff if they were unhappy or concerned. Details of external professionals and agencies are provided in various documents throughout the school. This also enables any boy to raise a concern independently. An overwhelming majority of parents who completed surveys describe the school as being 'outstanding' and 'the best'. Parents have not raised any concerns about the conduct of the school.

Safeguarding procedures are effective in practice and take into account a wide range of factors including the supervision of boarders, matters not directly relating to the school and the

environment. Staff are kept abreast of practice through regular training and written policies are regularly revised and updated.

Anti-bullying policies and procedures are disseminated throughout the school. These are enhanced through the school's electronic database which is linked to behavioural management systems. Additional work is being done for anyone connected with the school including the boys, to report concerns on bullying including cyber bullying via the school's website. A very small minority of boys said in surveys that they have been bullied. Some also say that the school is very prompt in dealing with unacceptable behaviours. In speaking with the boys, they say that bullying is not an issue. The most extreme is sometimes name calling and what they describe as 'banter', which is quickly resolved. The boys did associate bullying with past experiences prior to coming to this school and say they feel safe and are much happier now.

Significant incidents are managed promptly and effectively. The school's crisis management plan is accessible and communication systems are strong.

The school does not experience high incidents of boys being missing without authority. When incidents occur, staff know what to do and follow agreed procedures. These are effective in practice.

Extensive work is carried out for promoting and sustaining positive relationships between staff and the boys. The Cognitive Behavioural Therapist's role is key in forging strong connections between the school, the boys and families. In doing so, this has a positive impact on the boys' abilities to build on new relationships and friendships. Robust systems are in place for maximising communication between staff from across all remits of the school. This harnesses the work carried out with individual boys consistently and sensitively.

The 'Behaviour for Learning' database is integral to promoting positive behaviours. This electronic system focuses on two main behavioural management interventions; rewards and consequences. Although it operates during school hours, this electronic system is interactive and serves as a valuable resource during boarding hours. The boys are motivated by the rewards system and outstanding rewards are celebrated. The use of physical intervention is extremely rare and has not been used for some considerable time. Formal sanctions are usually imposed by the headmaster. Sanctions imposed during boarding hours are rare and are often the result of a sequence of events.

Health and safety procedures are stringent, ensuring the safety of the boys, staff and visitors. These procedures have evolved significantly over the last year and evidence of routine safety checks is clear and concise. The types of safety checks carried out are wide ranging and includes fire safety, electrical, gas and water safety. Risk management processes are extensive with very clear protocols in place for ensuring the safety of the boys for off site activities. Risk assessments for fire and water safety are current and work is in progress to address the action plans for these assessments. A broad range of health and safety training has been undertaken by staff from different remits of the school including fire safety, food hygiene, first aid and moving and handling.

The school has revised the process for staff recruitment that is now fully compliant with national minimum standards. The process for carrying out checks will ensure that all staff are vetted appropriately prior to offer of employment.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The residential remit of the school is proactive and consistent in supporting the boys education. In doing so, care staff liaise daily with teaching staff and other professionals such as the nurse and the Learning Development Centre. The prep sessions during boarding hours are well managed and staffing resources enables individual boys to receive extra tuition if required. The boys say that resources for study and research are plentiful and this includes access to a good library and computers. The varying types of support is highly valued by parents and the boys. This includes the input from the Learning Development Centre, a revised programme for 'gifted and talented' boys and the vast array of after school clubs which include sporting activities, leisure, music, photography and off site activities. Educational achievements are celebrated throughout the school day and evenings. The boys describe the school as a 'forgiving' and 'patient' environment and as a result, they are more eager to learn and do well.

The varying types of support are exceptional and the boys say they could not wish for better. The quality of professional support ensures a reliable and effective service for meeting individual needs, including speech and language therapy and pastoral support. This extends into family situations and across the different remits of the school. A new mentoring scheme is now in place which all boys and staff are a part of. The boys say they benefit from this scheme and have established sound relationships with their mentoring member of staff.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The views of the boys are taken seriously. Changes have been made as a result of listening to the boys. This includes the recruitment of extra physical education teachers and the A-level curriculum is more supported. Changes are currently being considered for evening activities and competitions. The boys say they are happy with the way in which the school council is elected and its functions. Senior boys appreciate the flexibility and opportunities in their year group. The school environment is inclusive and all remits are supportive of all the boys. This means that boys feel they can visit any of the departments or staff if they feel the need to talk.

Admission and discharge procedures are robust. Boys say that their initial experiences of the school were much more positive to what they had experienced previously. As a result, their confidence and opportunities for learning have grown. Senior boys are very excited about the different opportunities available to them whilst preparing to become more independent young adults. For example, the school curriculum and after school clubs are tailored accordingly. The boys are also very positive about the enrichment programme which is designed to help prepare them for life after this school including further education and career prospects. The year long programme is wide ranging and includes a number of speakers who visit the school to discuss topics. These include representatives from the armed forces, connexions and universities. Additional topics include stress management which benefits some boys through the transition to higher education studies and a volunteering programme. The whole school approach to this programme is significant in addressing individualised needs. The post 16 support programme enables former pupils to contact the school. This is telephone or face to face support service. This is proving to be a highly valued service for some boys who have moved on.

Care planning is undertaken in detail and addresses the holistic needs of each boy with contributions from the different remits of the school. The methods of recording individual needs vary in accordance with assessed needs. Each boy is consulted on targets for development and achievement. These are monitored for effectiveness and written review reports are clear and concise.

Contact arrangements with parents is a key strength and staff describe parent support as being excellent. Boys contact parents as agreed on admission. Parents can access relevant information about their son via the school's website. Other forms of contact and support are in place and evolving. For example, a recent initiative now includes the Cognitive Behavioural Therapist visiting families in support of varying circumstances and situations.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The school environment offers vast opportunities for learning and recreation. The boys say they enjoy all of the provisions especially the 'shire huts' for use by sixth formers, the new gymnasium and the newly built Learning Development Centre. The boys also describe their accommodation as being comfortable and well maintained. Significant developments have been achieved over the last year and further plans are in place to further develop parts of the school. This will benefit all remits including the residential provision. Fencing is being erected around the borders of the school boundary and closed circuit television has been installed to the exterior of the school buildings. This is to deter unauthorised persons accessing the school site.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

A Statement of Purpose is included in the school's prospectus. This document is currently under review. The boys receive a welcome document which is comprehensive and clearly sets out arrangements for boarding provisions.

The boys benefit immensely from a staff team who are well managed. Staff deployment and shift arrangements ensure minimum disruption, particularly during evenings and weekends. External activities and outings are carefully planned, taking into account the numbers of staff required for appropriately supervising the boys and ensuring their safety. The boys are supported by a staff team of both genders and staff are responsive for assisting in emergencies such as sickness and absence.

All staff are appropriately supervised and supported which includes informal conversations, daily handovers and formal supervision meetings which take place at least once every half term. Outcomes are recorded and contributes towards annual performance reviews. Lines of accountability are very clear and job descriptions for all staff have recently been revised and updated in line with the recruitment process.

The residential remit of the school is managed by a very experienced head of care who is also suitably qualified. The management team has been strengthened by the recent recruitment of a deputy head of care. This post is integral to supporting staff and the boys. Recent movements within the staff team means that at least 80% of the staff team have not achieved the National Vocational Qualification in the Caring for Children and Young People at level 3 or equivalent. However, some staff are working towards a professional qualification and some are in the

process of being registered. The minimum percentage will be achieved based on current projections for completion of this training.

Significant events are properly managed. When appropriate, these are reported to the headmaster if follow up or consequential action is necessary. In most cases, the headmaster is involved in decision making processes, such as sanctions and direct contact with parents if there are concerns about the welfare of a boy. Staff have delegated duties for monitoring key records and outcomes for the boys such as health and safety, nutrition and safeguarding. As a result of recent audits, the monitoring of recruitment records is becoming more efficient with a clearer and detailed process in place.

A wealth of information is shared between the school and the governing body including reports and statistical information. The governing body are instrumental in monitoring the conduct of the school and outcomes for all boys including those who board. Findings are reported in minutes of governor meetings. School governors are visiting the school frequently and dates of visits this year exceeds the national minimum standard. However, governors are not producing reports as specifically required under national minimum standard 33.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The boys speak about the school with great enthusiasm and appreciation. Some of their views summarises the school as being very caring, understanding and everyone being treated equally and with respect. The boys can relate to the ethos of the school with a feeling of being comfortable and confident about their needs and how these needs are met. The opportunities for learning, development and social interactions are extensive and constantly evolving. These range from themed food nights, involvement with local events, international links with another school and a vast array of resources available at the school. The quality of pastoral care is excellent. It is central to the wellbeing of all boys and where appropriate, this benefits individual boys and their families.

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 the governing body provides a report for visits to the school as specified under national minimum standard 33. (nms 33)