

Cuckmere House School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Gaynor Moorey
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Date of last inspection	9 February 2009

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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

The school is a specialist special educational needs college for boys aged between 5 years and 16 years with an educational statement for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school is maintained by East Sussex County Council. A pupil referral unit is also provided within the school for junior pupils and there is a primary behaviour support service to support pupils in other schools, as well as other initiatives aimed at supporting young people to access education. The school's residential provision is located in a separate building in a residential area, approximately half a mile from the main school site. Up to 12 boys can stay overnight at Tower House and generally stay between one and three nights during the school week. There is extended day provision for both primary and secondary pupils.

Summary

This announced key inspection took place on a week day. The purpose of the inspection was to undertake a full review encompassing all the key national minimum standards.

The school continues to provide a excellent standard of care, which is provided by the head of care and the experienced staff team. The school is maintained by comprehensive and clear guidance, policies and procedures and tries to ensure that the students are safe from harm. The school provides the students with an outstanding level of emotional support and encourages them with their education and interests. The school ensures that information is in place to enable statutory and educational reviews to take place. The students are given opportunities to express their opinions and make choices about their lives. The school is well maintained and provides a good environment for the students to live in. The staff are well supported by an experienced head of care and senior management team. The senior management team has comprehensive systems in place that include supervision, training and the overall monitoring of the school.

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 the school were given three recommendation that were related to the following national minimum standards: make direct contact with each referee to verify references (national minimum standard 27.2); change the lock on a toilet to make it accessible to staff from outside in an emergency (national minimum standard 25.5); review and revise the system for recording consent for non-prescription household medications, and ensure that medication records for young people who no longer attend the school are removed from the working file (national minimum standard 14.18 and 14.20). The school have taken action to meet these recommendations by having a new system in place to check references, the lock on the bathroom door has now been changed to a safety lock, and new medication systems are now in place.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Each student has a health plan in place which details information about medical history and current health needs. The school has clear guidance and training for staff in place to ensure they have experience and knowledge when assisting the students to take their medication. The

medicines in the boarding house are given to the students by trained appropriate care staff. The systems in place at the medical room have continued to be developed to ensure excellent consistent practice when dealing with the students' health and medical needs. The head of care undertakes the overall monitoring of the medical systems. All of the students have consent for all forms of medical treatment. The school has written guidance on promoting the health and welfare of the students, such as the new policy for medication administration. The students are enabled to discuss these issues with staff both in and out of school.

Student's dietary needs are provided for, with the experienced staff being aware of the new guidance on healthy eating in schools. The students identified they could ask for changes in the menu at the boarding house and help shop and prepare the meal. The main meal is served at lunchtime and the pupils can access the main choice including a vegetarian option, a jacket potato and topping and salad. Meals within the school are served at two sitting for junior and senior students. The students sit in their tutor groups at lunchtime. Teaching staff eat with them and provide sensitive and unobtrusive supervision of their behaviour during the meal. The students reflected, through conversations and questionnaires, that they enjoyed the food and felt they had a say in what they ate.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Confidentiality is respected in the school. The students have privacy and space given to them whilst in the houses. Telephone calls, when needed, can be made in private. All student records are kept safely and securely. Staff are trained in confidentiality of information.

Students identified they would know how to complain and who they would speak to. A complaints process is in place for both the students and parents or carers. If an issue can be sorted out before it becomes an official complaint this happens and the outcome is recorded. There have been no recorded complaints since the last inspection.

The school has developed its new child protection policy in line with safeguarding proposals. The school has also provided the staff with updated child protection training. The school has clear systems of dealing with issues and this could be seen within the records. The school have had no incidents related to child protection since the last inspection. During the child protection training staff are given guidance on confidentiality of information. The students said they felt staff did keep information private. Both the students, parents and social workers reflected that the school was felt to be a safe place.

The school has a zero tolerance approach to bullying and is proactively dealing with any issues in the school. The school has also been involved in running workshops in national anti-bullying week. The staff employ the use of risk assessments and behaviour management plan to keep the students safe and encourage positive behaviour towards each other. The students confirmed that bullying happens, but it is dealt with by the staff. Parents spoken to at the inspection said their son was now much safer being at the school than where they had been before.

The school has a clear policy and procedure in place for when students go missing. However, this does need to be reviewed due to the date it was produced. The records of young people going missing show that has not been any incidents since the last inspection in regards to the boarding house.

The school operates a consistent approach to behaviour management both within the school and boarding areas. The staff are trained in techniques with greater emphasis on using behaviour management. Due to the excellent behaviour management programmes there are in the place within the boarding a restraint incident is rare. The boarding house operates an earned reward system, appropriate to its age group, to encourage positive outcomes when dealing with behaviour issues. The school has clear guidance in place as to which sanctions are permissible. Recorded sanctions show that staff rarely need to use punishments. Some students who spent time with the inspector and who completed questionnaires said that they did understand why the sanctions are used. The students also said that they felt that they were always treated fairly.

There are numerous risk assessments in place with regards to ensuring the safety of the students. The assessments cover activities. Boarding houses are audited on a weekly basis to ensure there are no risks to the students. Accidents are recorded regularly and include details on how each situation is dealt with and what treatment is given. Fire safety is ensured via regular checks on equipment and alarms. Fire drills are regularly carried out and posters help the students understand what must happen if the fire alarm sounds.

The appropriate checks are carried out on staff before they start work at the school. A new system has been introduced to highlight the conformation of references. The school has a clear system in place for checking visitors in and out. The daily taxi service for the students is organised by the local authority.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The students are supported by the staff in the boarding house to attend and manage the school day. The inspector was told by care staff of the good relationships that exist between them, and all emphasised that they work as a team to implement the whole school approach to address the needs of the students. The boarding is run as part of the 24 hour curriculum and extended education hours.

The school has a excellent activities programme, and on each evening the children are able to chose between activities at the boarding house and going out into the community. Each of the students has achievement folder and photographs can be seen of what activities they undertaken whilst boarding. During the course of the year the school have put on several events which the students have enjoyed immensely. The boarding houses also organises events where parents can attend to spend time with their children and that the whole family can attend.

The school also run two school activity camps in the summer. The senior boys went to the New Forest and the junior students had overnights and activity days staying at the boarding house in preparation for boarding the following year. The boarding house also arrange different cultural events and this year have celebrated different cultures.

The children have their needs for specific support outlined in their individual welfare plans and the school offers specific help and counselling. Care and behaviour programmes are built around the specific needs of each young person, and can take into account the differing behaviour patterns of each student.

The students are supported by the staff at the school and relationships were seen to be warm and caring in a professional manner. The students said they would feel able to talk to the staff and feel listened to.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The school has a school council who are voted in by the other students. The council meets every half term. The students said some food had changed when they made a suggestion in the boarding house. Those who spent time with the inspector and completed questionnaires were confident in stating their views about why they are at the school, what targets they have achieved and what they hope for in the future. In answer to the question 'What are the best things at the school?' they answered 'we learn lots of stuff and have good activities and get to see our friends'.

Parents attend reviews and have weekly contact with the school. The school and boarding house also hold family events at Christmas and a barbecue in the summer. The boarding house also runs activities so that parents and carers can be involved on a one-to-one basis with their child. Parents receive a guide to the school when their child first attends. The care staff group is stable and, therefore, able to offer consistency in their relationships with the young people. The students enjoy these relationships, time spent with staff and feel they can trust them to look after them whilst they are away from home.

The admissions procedure includes a detailed assessment and young people can visit the school before admission. All new students are given a copy of the students' guide, which is accessible and useful. Students said that it told them what they needed to know when they first arrived at the school. Welfare plans address longer-term goals that are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis by all those who will help the students when they leave the school. Transition planning begins in the students final year. Parents and carers are fully involved and consulted at every stage.

The students confirmed they have regular contact with home and are able to use the students' telephone and office telephone.

Each student has a welfare plan which was seen to be comprehensive and holistic in its approach. The plans set goals and objectives for each young person.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The school is set in a large house with a variety of out buildings, secure play areas and large grounds. The environment is conducive to providing the students with a good all round experience of school life. The school has security systems in place and risk assessments to ensure the safety of the students.

The boarding facilities are set in a separate house and divided into two sides, one for the juniors and one for the seniors. Each side of the house is appropriately decorated, clean and tidy. Only the senior students board overnight and have single bedrooms. There are communal areas such as the lounges and a large garden. The boarding accommodation continues to be on a rolling plan for upgrading the standard of the house.

The house has adequate bathrooms and toilets for the amount of students staying there. The students said that they can have privacy and this is respected by staff and those around them. The staff have separate facilities for sleeping in.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Staff ensure through practice and guidance that the rights of the young people are met and they do not face racism or discriminatory abuse. The young people have their cultural needs met by individualised care planning and review processes, which highlight and guide staff to meet the wishes of the young people themselves.

The school has a variety of information linked to the statement of purpose including the students' guide and the parents' and carers' handbook. The guidance offers a clear picture of the school, its ethos and its daily routines. Alongside the statement of purpose the school has up-to-date policies and procedures and new policies have been produced to recognise new practice. Monitoring of the records and files was seen to be happening on a regular basis with senior staff undertaking this role. All records are stored safely and securely.

The overall management of the school is very good, and the senior management team have implemented positive changes and improved existing systems. The care staff felt that they could suggest and be given the scope to try new ideas which have developed rapidly over the last year, in such areas as the arts, sports and activities.

The school has a long-term core of staff in the care staff team. Teaching assistants within the school also assist in the boarding house. New staff are supported by the long-term staff when starting their employment. The team offers the students a wealth of knowledge and experience. The team are supported by the head of care and the clear systems of supervision and training that are in place. The staff said they feel supported and happy with the extensive training they are offered.

The school has an overall comprehensive system in place for the monitoring of practice and safety issues, with visits once every half term from an external person. The school has continued with its comprehensive monitoring of those records connected to staying safe. The records are used to look at how systems are working and if any specific problems are arising. The head of the school has continued to work hard with the support of the senior management team and the staff at the school to implement the constant change and development.

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 policy related to young people going missing is updated. (NMS 8.9)