

Northeast Manor School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Kevin Whatley / Liz Driver
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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

Northease Manor is an independent co-educational special school for pupils aged between 10 and 17. The school offers education and boarding provision for able and potentially able pupils who have a range of specific learning difficulties including dyslexia, dyspraxia and attention deficit disorder. Approximately 80 pupils currently attend the school with around half being boarders; boarding is provided on a weekly basis only. The school is situated near Lewes in East Sussex and is contained within its own grounds in a beautiful rural setting. Many of the buildings date from the Tudor period, with newer structures being constructed to complement the overall ambience of the school. The main boarding facilities are provided in four separate parts of the school. Boys and girls are accommodated in separate accommodation.

Summary

This inspection was announced taking place over the course of two days during the school week. Three recommendations were made at the last inspection and these were found to have been addressed. The overall outcome for this inspection was outstanding. Young people clearly benefit from having their dietary and health care needs met extremely well, while the approach taken in respect of meeting their emotional needs is excellent. Rigorous and comprehensive safeguarding policies and practices ensure young people are as safe as can be. The manner in which young people are assisted to consider their particular behaviours or attitudes is outstanding. Young people receive excellent levels of individual support, advice and guidance to meet their needs, notably in respect of helping them to gain a much higher sense of self esteem and self worth. The school provides a generally good standard of accommodation, although some areas are in need of redecoration. The school is managed extremely well with boarding seen as an integral and vital aspect of school life. The staff team are committed and knowledgeable and continue to provide a very high standard of care.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Three recommendations were made at the last inspection. One was in relation to developing a more integrated way of combining the school and boarding day for young people. A review subsequently took place with a more considered 24 hour curriculum being implemented. The second recommendation concerned the need to assist boarders more as they approach the time when they would be leaving their statutory education. Since the last inspection considerable thought has gone into preparing year 11 pupils for transitions away from school. To this effect a more focused approach has been implemented including the earlier scheduling of mock exams, a greater emphasis on providing life skills programmes and a soon to be introduced responsible prefects scheme for older pupils. The final recommendation was made in regard the school's Statement of Purpose needing to be brought up to date. The school has recently produced a new prospectus alongside a new website which reflects the schools current aims and objectives and the nature of provision offered to boarders.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people have their health care needs met to a high standard. The emotional health needs of young people are addressed in an excellent manner. Young people with specific health issues, such as diabetes, are provided with appropriate support. Staff are trained in first aid and consents are in place to enable such treatment to be given and for medication to be administered. Clear communication with parents ensures they are kept informed of medical matters.

The approach toward providing young people with professional support continues to be a major strength of the school. Easy access to counselling, speech and language and occupational therapy is a significant benefit for young people in ensuring their particular needs are met. Young people view such support as a positive and usual aspect of school life which assists them greatly. Joint working protocols ensure young people receive such support in good time. Recent agreements will see a multi-disciplinary community team based on site which should further strengthen the availability of expert intervention.

The storage and administration of medication is of a high standard which ensures young people have any medicines provided to them safely. Medication is only given out by those staff who are competent to do so and who have received suitable training. All medicines are stored appropriately in secure cupboards within designated rooms. Records of medication given are very well maintained and stock checked, although the monitoring of records by a senior member of staff does not occur routinely. A suitable medication policy is in place, however, some aspects of it are somewhat limited.

Young people benefit from receiving a nutritious and varied diet. The catering department continues to work hard to ensure healthy eating is promoted. Regular contact with young people and parents ensures feedback is gained including suggestions for improvement. Wherever possible fresh and locally produced food is actively sought and used and there is a salad bar and fresh fruit available at mealtimes. Feedback received from young people, such as through the school council and boarders forum, have seen additional food choices made available. Recent changes have been made to the mealtime routines which has led to a more relaxed and age appropriate environment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The privacy of young people is suitably respected and information concerning them is stored securely and handled in a confidential fashion. The levels of staff supervision are appropriate to the needs of young people with times when young people bath or shower being sensitively managed.

A good level of information is made available to young people should they wish to make a complaint. Details are provided in a number of formats to ensure young people with communication or comprehension problems can understand them easily. When complaints are made they are suitably responded to with records clearly evidencing their outcomes.

Young people have their welfare promoted across the school and are kept as safe as is possible. Staff receive safeguarding training and are mindful of their responsibilities in regard to child protection issues. The school has very clear lines of responsibility should any child protection matters arise and these comply with local safeguarding protocols and procedures.

The school has a zero tolerance approach to bullying which young people are aware of. Good levels of supervision reduce the risks of such behaviour occurring. Information regarding bullying and what young people can do if they are worried about this is displayed around the boarding areas. No young people raised bullying as a concern, but staff are mindful of the subtleties of intolerant or prejudicial attitudes or behaviour.

A clear and obvious procedure is in place to respond to situations should young people leave the school without permission. Young people are made fully aware of potential risks and understand where the school's boundaries are situated. Incidents of this nature are extremely rare but are responded to swiftly when they take place.

The ethos of the school is based firmly on treating each other with respect and dignity. Expectations of behaviour are clear and appropriate with young people given every opportunity to consider their inappropriate actions in a thoughtful and responsive manner. The school culture places an emphasis of focusing on rewarding positive behaviours, attitudes and effort and allowing young people to learn from experience. Behaviour seen during the inspection was exemplary, notably so given the fact that most young people have complex learning and comprehension issues.

The health and safety of young people and staff alike is taken seriously. All aspects of health and safety, including fire risks, are addressed in a robust manner. Routine checks and tests are carried out such as the hot water temperatures and gas and electrical servicing. Comprehensive assessments are completed which highlight environmental risks and how these can be safely managed. The health and safety policy of the school is reviewed annually.

The school has a suitable recruitment policy which ensures staff do not work with young people unless all the required checks and references have been confirmed, including those of gap students.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive excellent support and guidance within boarding to engage fully in their education. The culture of the school places boarding as an integral part of its function with approximately half of the whole school population also being boarders. Communication across the school is robust and comprehensive with information passing easily between education and pastoral staff. Since the last inspection greater impetus has focused on further integrating education and boarding provision as part of a 24 hour curriculum approach. It is clear working practices across the school support the needs of each young person as a whole and are therefore holistic in nature.

Young people enjoy access to a range of activities and pursuits. Activities are seen as a vibrant and important aspect of the school day with a good balance being found between learning, enjoyment and exercise. Young people engage in after school activities including football, arts and craft, cooking and interactive computer games. The school day is carefully considered with sound structures and routines. Recent changes have meant that young people are allowed more time to relax with their peers; this is a positive move as young people find it helps them recharge before prep. Young people take part in community based activities such as trips to leisure centres. There are further developments, in relation to community activities, being considered to widen young people's involvement in the community.

Young people receive outstanding levels of individual support, guidance and care. As noted previously a wide range of expert advice and guidance is readily available which allows for all areas of need to be considered as part of each young person's placement. Professional input includes speech and language and occupational therapy and counselling. Close working practices culminate in holistic programmes of care linked to individual education plans. Staff clearly understand the needs of young people in their care and as a result are able to respond swiftly if young people are showing signs of stress, frustration or unhappiness.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people are assisted to express their views, opinions and wishes. A school council exists which, by nature of the numbers of pupils also being boarders, take into account the needs of those young people living at the school. A separate boarders' forum allows for a more focused agenda. Young people feel listened to as recent requests have led to more bread and rolls being available at mealtimes and evening routines have been changed to allow for more time relaxing before prep. An independent listener is attached to the school with their contact details detailed around boarding areas.

The needs of young people are fully assessed and considered prior to the point of admission. As a school the main focus is around educational and learning needs; however, these are seen in line with pastoral requirements. Individual plans highlight what issues young people may have and how they should be met. The approach by the school is holistic taking into account methods of communication, learning difficulty and self esteem.

Boarding facilities are grouped into age ranges which allows for more age appropriate care and support. The school is actively seeking to improve ways to prepare young people when they are due to leave. For instance, the bringing forward of year 11 mock exams has enabled the school to plan more effectively for individual transitions. A review is currently underway to find the most suitable way to introduce a more defined life skills programme for older boarders. The introduction of a prefects system to encourage the development of responsibility is being considered.

A majority of young people maintain very regular contact with their parents or carers. Boarding occurs during the week only, with regular contact maintained between the school and parents and carers when necessary. Pay phones are situated around boarding areas should young people wish to phone home, while most young people have mobile phones. The school is in the process of improving wireless internet access which will soon be accessible in all areas of the school site.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are able to change out of uniform once the school day has finished. Since the last inspection young people no longer have to travel to and from school in uniform which is seen by them as a positive change.

Young people who stay at the school are provided with a generally good standard of accommodation. Boarding accommodation is found in three distinct areas of the school with four boarding groups altogether. The school is set in beautiful rolling countryside and is an

extremely pleasant location in which to live and learn. Bedrooms and communal spaces are of a reasonable size and young people can personalise their rooms with posters and pictures should they wish. Good facilities are available both within the boarding areas and outside. The buildings are well maintained inside and out, however, some of the décor appears somewhat tired and in need of attention.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

A good level of information is provided to young people and others regarding the school and the services it offers, including boarding. The school prospectus has recently been updated, while a new website allows easy access to detailed information.

Young people benefit from being cared for by staff who are experienced, committed and who clearly understand their individual needs. The routines and structures of the whole school day assist young people to be cared for in a consistent fashion. Communication between staff is excellent and ensures a joined up approach across the school. Staff benefit from receiving good levels of supervision and training which are relevant to their roles and responsibilities and the overall needs of the young people in their care. Staff are well guided in carrying out their tasks with clear lines of accountability. Interactions between staff and young people is respectful, open and relaxed.

The school is managed extremely well with staff and young people benefiting from committed and purposeful leadership and management. The head of school and senior management team promote boarding as a fundamental and important aspect of school life with the needs of young people seen as paramount. Recent changes in the senior boarding staff team have been responded to in a timely and thorough manner with no obvious negative impact to the daily lives of young people. In general a good level of monitoring ensures records and practices are reviewed so as to identify any patterns or issues. However, some areas of monitoring, such as medication records, are not completed as routinely as could be. A member of the governing body completes routine visits to monitor care provision.

It is clear the culture of the school continues to support, encourage and guide young people to learn and achieve to the best of their abilities.

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):

- consider expanding the current medication policy in regard the administering and storing of medicines taking into account relevant guidance (NMS 14.17)

- ensure all accommodation is furnished, decorated and maintained to a high standard (NMS 24.2)
- consider implementing a more robust and obvious system for the monitoring of care. (NMS 32.2)