

# Coln House

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Michael Williams
<b>Type of Inspection</b>	Key

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	24 June 2008

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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**

This residential special school caters for boys and girls aged nine to 16 years old. At the end of 2009, weekly boarding was provided for 27 boys and five girls, and in addition the school had 20 day pupils. The boarding accommodation is divided into five separate house areas providing small group living. A small cottage that was previously available for independence training is now being used to introduce new residents to the school. All pupils have emotional, behavioural, social and associated learning difficulties.

The school is maintained by the local authority and is situated on the edge of a market town.

### **Summary**

This was an announced full inspection. Its focus was to inspect the key national minimum standards for residential special schools. The main findings from this inspection are that in relation to the five Every Child Matters outcomes for children, three are judged outstanding and the remaining two are judged good and satisfactory. Following Ofsted's benchmarking guidance on making social care inspection judgements, because the staying safe outcome is judged satisfactory, the judgement for organisation can be no greater, and as a result the overall judgement is satisfactory.

Outstanding aspects include: the health care and meals that children receive at the school; the individual support they are given; the residential contribution to children's education; the school's consultation with children and their management of their admission and leaving; the contact that children, and the school, maintain with their families and carers; and the school's promotion of equality and diversity.

The recruitment of staff working with children in the school's residential provision is inadequate. The school's fire risk assessment has not been updated. The specialist external services provided to children identified as having particular support needs is currently insufficient.

Predominantly positive comments were received from boarders, their parents and carers, and professionals working with them. One parent commented that generally the school 'is doing an excellent job.' A health professional commented that 'overall this school does its best to manage the county's most challenging children.' Two social workers commented how pleased they were with the progress of the children they have placed at the school. Children generally commented that the school is good at: helping them; looking after them; keeping them safe; and giving them lots of fun things to do.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

The last inspection in June 2008 reported three recommendations to improve the quality of care further. These recommendations related to staff recruitment, accident records and governors' monitoring visits. The school has acted on the latter two recommendations, by introducing an accident log and by the majority of governors' visits including the recommended checks. However, the school has not fully implemented the latest safer recruitment practices as previously recommended.

## Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The health care needs of each child are very well identified and met. The school has up-to-date health information on each child, and since September 2009, a registered nurse has been based at the school. She has further improved the school's handling of medicines, and along with the school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) coordinator provides PSHE to children. The school has a sick bay, a medical room, and first aid trained staff. A paediatrician visits monthly. As a result, the health care of each child is actively promoted by the school.

Children are provided with very healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. The school's catering supervisor ensures that children are given a freshly prepared and nutritious lunch and dinner. The school has their own market garden and chickens that provide fresh food for children's meals. The school has won awards for its gardening and use of local food. There is a cook in each house area because meal times are house-based to ensure they are well-managed, social occasions. The school caters for children with special dietary meals and celebrates special days, such as Hanukkah, with special foods.

## Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's privacy is respected and their information is confidentially handled. One child commented that 'everyone respects each other's space and privacy'. Where the premises permit it, children are accommodated in single bedrooms. Children's individual case files are securely stored.

Children know how and feel able to complain if they are unhappy with any aspect of living in the school. The school has a complaints procedure of which children, their parents and carers, and outside agencies are aware. Governors' monitoring visits often include checks on the school's records of complaints.

There are systems in place in the school which aim to prevent abuse of children and to ensure that suspicions or allegations of abuse are properly responded to. For example, staff are child protection trained and the school's child protection procedures are consistent with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. Earlier in the inspection year, child protection and staff disciplinary procedures were properly followed when a child alleged that a member of staff had inappropriately restrained them during an incident. A safeguarding professional commented that 'safeguarding is good' at the school, and that they have 'consistently acted in the interests of the children.'

Children are protected from bullying by others. In their surveys for this inspection, most children commented that if they have been bullied by other children, or seen others being bullied, the school has dealt with this effectively. The school used national anti-bullying week in November 2009 to carry out an annual bullying survey with their children. They predominantly responded that they feel safe at the school. In response to the survey results, the school revised their anti-bullying policy, introducing different levels of bullying with different consequences.

The school has a protocol in place with the police to protect children who have absconded or gone missing. In 2009, the school did not have to make any notifications to their local authority regarding children absconding or going missing.

Children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour, through encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour. The school uses a behaviour tracking software system to track children's negative and positive behaviour at any time. This record informs the individual behaviour targets that the school sets for children to improve their behaviour, and provides useful information for children's review meetings. The school also operates a well established points system with children, that effectively acts as a behavioural incentive: points lead to desirable privileges and prizes. All staff are trained in an approved method of physical intervention, and the school's record of their use of physical intervention and sanctions includes all the information recommended. A social worker commented that 'behaviour is managed very well'.

Positive steps are taken to keep children, staff and visitors safe from risk from fire and other hazards.

The school carries out and records a risk assessment on each child, that includes an assessment of their behaviour escalation and de-escalation, as part of reducing unnecessary hazards to children. Risk assessments are also completed for children's off-site activities. Together with site staff and external contractors, the school's site manager effectively maintains the school's buildings and grounds. In 2008, the school completed all of the work identified following their fire risk assessment in 2006. However, this fire risk assessment has not been updated since. A recommendation is therefore reported regarding this.

The selection and vetting of all staff working with children in the school is still not satisfactory. The previous inspection recommended that the school fully implement safer recruitment practices. However, the school has not fully implemented the latest government guidance on the recruitment of staff working in the residential provision at schools. The recruitment records of the two most recently recruited residential staff did not include all of the checks required before they started work. While the school had ensured that these staff were supervised, while they were waiting for their outstanding checks, this is not current safe recruitment practice. A recommendation is therefore reported regarding this.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

The school's residential provision very actively supports children's educational progress at the school. Care and teaching staff work very closely and effectively together. For example, care staff support behaviour management in the classroom, and all of the school's information on each child accommodated is a bringing together of the knowledge of both care and teaching staff. Literacy and numeracy activities, that are adapted to children's individual needs and made as informal and as enjoyable as possible, are carried out in the house areas, where the social skills children are taught assist them in the classroom.

Children receive individual support when they need it. They receive this support both internally, for example from one to ones with their key workers, and externally, for example from sessions with the visiting mental health worker and anger management consultant. A health professional commented that they 'have seen staff be immensely supportive to distressed children.' However, the school has recently started to accommodate children regarded by their local authority as 'hard to place', and as a result has found that these children need more access to specialist external services, such as therapy, educational psychology and mental health services. A recommendation is therefore reported regarding this.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Children are very well encouraged and supported to influence the way the school is run. At the start of each week, children participate in a support group meeting with care staff in their house areas, when the menu and activities for the week ahead are discussed. Consultation with children also takes place via school council meetings and periodic surveys regarding bullying and food. The school takes children's views into account when decisions affecting their welfare are made.

Children experience very well planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes. To assist with these transitions, the school follows suitable processes for introducing children on admission and for their integration back into their families and carers full time during their school leaving year. During this inspection, the school was using their small cottage to gradually introduce a new resident to the school, as they had been out of school for so long.

Children have their needs comprehensively assessed and written placement plans outline how these needs will be met while at the school. The school receives a variety of referral information on children. This can include special educational needs, common assessment framework (CAF) and looked after children assessments. When needed, staff at the school are trained to contribute to CAF assessments. The school assesses this information and in the light of it agrees a placement plan for each child, that they follow and regularly review to provide consistent and appropriate care.

Although children are only resident at the school for four nights a week during school time, they are still encouraged to maintain contact with their families and carers while living away from them. This is achieved by telephone calls and visits, both to home and to the school. The school's placement plan includes children's contact arrangements with their family and carers. The school also has an activity community outreach manager and home liaison officer who work with and support children's families, and other professionals working with them, when needed. A parent commented 'the communication between the school and parents is excellent.'

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

The school's location, design and size provides sufficient space and facilities to meet children's needs. The school has large grounds and five separate house areas across two sites. Each house area is made as homely as possible by the children and staff, and the accommodation is maintained to a good standard within the restrictions of its listed building status. The school promotes excellent links between the children and the local community.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The school has a written Statement of Purpose that was last reviewed in August 2009. It provides those needing the information with access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for the children it accommodates.

The school maintains clear and accurate records on both its staff and child groups, which in response to a recommendation previously reported now also include an accident log.

Children are looked after by staff who are consistently able to meet their needs, who are themselves supported in promoting their welfare, and who are competent. The school's staffing policy is set out in their childcare policy and ensures that the level of staffing is adequate to meet children's needs, both day and night. A parent commented that 'there is always someone the pupils can call on if there are any problems day or night.' The head of care effectively line manages all of the residential care staff, through regular supervision and appraisal meetings. 'To develop and improve pupil progress' is one of the areas of staff performance they appraise. The school holds whole staff meetings weekly, and care staff meetings monthly. The head of care is well qualified, trained and experienced for their role. Care staff competence is assessed via the relevant national vocational qualification, which they have either completed, are completing, or are waiting to commence.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. This is most evident in the work that the school does with children with emotional, behavioural, social and associated learning difficulties: to counteract the discrimination, and sometimes the exclusion, that they have previously experienced, and to promote their inclusion in the local and their home community and wider society.

Children and staff enjoy the stability of an efficiently run school. The school has a strong senior management team. It is led by a headteacher who like the head of care is also well qualified, trained and experienced for their role, and has also been working at the school for many years. Between them they regularly monitor the school's records to identify any issues requiring action to improve the school's childcare. To this end, the school also has a 2010 development plan.

The school's governing body monitors the welfare of the children in the school. Following a recommendation previously reported, this is now achieved by a governor visiting the school half termly, and writing a report to the governing body on the school's conduct. Most of these governors' visits now include the checks recommended. The chair of governors commented that these visits continue to improve, in terms of their frequency and quality, as the governing body does.

## **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):

- update the fire risk assessment for the school (NMS 26.1)
- implement in practice the latest guidance, relating to the school's residential provision, for the recruitment of all staff and volunteers who work with children in the school (NMS 27.1)



- provide in practice the specialist external services that particular children in placement require. (NMS 22.9)