

Muntham House School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Gaynor Moorey / Paul Taylor
Type of Inspection	Key

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Date of last inspection	30 March 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 non maintained Residential Special School for pupils aged between eight and 18 years. It is a designated school for pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties who may in addition have Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder (AD(H)D). All pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs.

The school buildings are set in extensive grounds. Accommodation is located in the main building and in a separate building for the sixth form. There are numerous outdoor areas for the pupils to enjoy activities.

Summary

This announced key inspection took place over two week days. The purpose of the inspection was to undertake a full review encompassing all the key national minimum standards for Residential Special Schools.

The school provides an outstanding standard of care through the work of the Principal the head of care and the experienced care staff team. The pupils are safe at the school and their safety is maintained through the comprehensive and clear guidance, policies and procedures. The school provides the pupils with emotional support and encourages them with their education and interests. The school ensures that comprehensive information is in place to enable reviews to take place. The pupils have contact with family and friends whilst at school and are given opportunities to express their opinions and make choices about their lives. The school is maintained to a good level providing a homely environment for the children to stay in. The staff are supported by an experienced head of care and excellent systems that include supervision and 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 received six recommendations which related to: ensuring that restraint records contain all the details required by national minimum standards; ensuring that written references are received before a member of staff commences employment; continuing to work towards achieving a ratio of at least 80% of the staff team who have achieved National Vocational Training Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People; continuing with the refurbishment program so that the decor and furnishings in all the boarding areas are in good condition; responding in writing to the comments and recommendations made by governors following their monitoring visits; that Ofsted details are included in the complaints policy.

The school has worked hard to address the recommendations and has ensured that all new staff have two references in place before commencing employment, which have been verified. Staff on the care team either now have their National Vocational Qualification level 3 or are now working towards completing the course. Written responses to the governors monitoring visits were seen for each visit. The school has now included the Ofsted name, address and telephone number in the complaints policy and continues its rolling plan of renovation of the residential

areas. Although the school has improved its system of recording restraints some incident reports still lacked detail and timescales.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The food offered to the pupils is varied and healthy. The catering staff are well aware of any specific dietary needs and whether these are based on religious, cultural or medical grounds. The pupils are offered a choice of menus and have the opportunity to enjoy foods from a variety of different cultural backgrounds. They also have the opportunity to prepare and cook different foods in their living areas and as part of developing their independence and life skills. They can voice their opinions about the food and their preferences in formal settings, such as the school council, and informally with tutors and care staff.

Each pupil has a health plan in place which details information about medical history and current health needs. The school has members of staff called 'Health Bursars' who offer oversight and expertise in the areas of medication, first aid and treatment. The systems in place are comprehensive. The Health Bursars ensure that the administration and storage of medication is achieved thoroughly and conscientiously. All of the pupils have written consent for medical treatment. Medical appointments are available to the young people with health care professionals. Specialist health input is arranged for pupils when it is required. Each pupil has a comprehensive package of care in place which addresses their health needs in a detailed and thorough manner.

Each pupil's emotional and physical wellbeing is promoted to an excellent standard.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

There is a clear policy and guidance for the staff to follow in relation to ensuring that the confidentiality and privacy of the pupils is protected. Pupils said they feel they have privacy within their living accommodation and can make telephone calls confidentially. Staff are aware of the importance of privacy and know with whom they can share sensitive information. All confidential information is kept securely stored.

Pupils are confident to express their opinions. The pupils felt their worries and issues were dealt with fairly by the staff. The pupils can speak to all staff to speak to including using more formal avenues such as key workers, educational staff and senior staff including the Principal. The vast majority of complaints are dealt with at an informal level. However, when pupils have chosen to complain formally, the process is well documented and resolutions were seen to be investigated internally and, where needed, externally.

The school has clear guidance for the staff to follow if they have concerns about a pupil's welfare. The school has good working relationships with the local authority designated officers for child protection. All members of staff are offered regular training to ensure that they are aware of their obligations. The Principal keeps thorough, detailed and well-organised records of any child protection concerns. These include details of all agencies involved and how the issue has been resolved.

The school operates a policy of zero tolerance towards bullying and the pupils are made aware of the guidance on admission. If bullying does occur, staff at the school deal with issues in an appropriate manner. The pupils are risk assessed for any potential issues related to bullying behaviour. Clear examples of how incidents are appropriately dealt with were seen during the inspection. The school has forums for pupils to talk on a one-to-one basis or as a group to look at any issues there may be within the landings they live on. The pupils did identify that bullying did happen at the school but it was dealt with by the staff.

The staff team are very aware of each pupil's vulnerability and level of risk should they go missing. Pen pictures are kept in each pupil's key-work file together with a photograph. This ensures that the information is readily available to the police should a pupil go missing.

Positive behaviour is encouraged and rewarded when it is achieved. Pupils can earn points throughout the day and this is rewarded by being able to have activities off the school's site and by earning money. Pupils are also rewarded for achieving targets identified in their key-work sessions. Staff have worked very hard over the last year to improve conduct and behaviour around the school and the atmosphere appeared to be calmer.

The school operates a system whereby records of incidents of challenging behaviour are assessed and collated with a view to analysing them and thereby identifying critical times and triggers. This in turn informs strategies for the staff team to develop in order to minimise incidents.

Staff respond positively to acceptable behaviour. All sanctions are recorded in a dedicated book. The sanctions given are permissible and within the school's sanctions policy.

All staff receive training in the use of physical restraint. The school has a policy which offers guidance to staff with regard to behaviour management and restraint. The young people have risk assessments that look at any risky behaviour; these sit alongside their behaviour management plans. Staff encourage acceptable behaviour, and restraint records show that staff respond appropriately in managing these situations. These records also show that the level of restraint used has been lowered over the course of the past year. Staff support pupils with their behaviour through one-to-one sessions and group meetings. The school has a clear recording system for the use of all restraint which includes feedback from the young people. Some of the restraint records did not hold full information or give timescales of the incident.

Areas of potential risk for the pupils are assessed and the young people are safeguarded where possible from harm. The school has documentation related to risk-assessing activities, holidays, fire risk and the environment. Records demonstrate that the school's fire alarm system is tested regularly and evacuation exercises carried out. The school ensures the pupils are aware of the fire procedure and each young person has a bundle bag to ensure they have clothing if the alarm were to go off at night. Clear systems are in place and checks could be seen from outside agencies and from the school's monitoring systems.

The recruitment process operated by the school is robust and thorough. Records were seen for all new staff at the school and clearly all records were in place before they started their employment.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils benefit from the school's holistic approach which ensures that all members of staff liaise closely with each other to ensure support is thoroughly and robustly prepared. This approach ensures that pupils receive outstanding levels of individual support. Comprehensive, detailed and thorough care plans are regularly reviewed to ensure that support is sensitively and consistently delivered. The young people are supported by the staff in the boarding areas to prepare for the school day.

Close liaison between teaching and care staff ensures that targets for each pupil are known across the campus. This ensures that the pupils can be supported and assessed regularly and progress can be monitored and supported. Pupils are involved in setting targets and reviewing their own progress in meetings with their tutor and key worker. The targets set are relevant to the pupil and encompass areas including behaviour management. By encouraging pupil input the school has ensured that they have an investment and say in the process.

The school has an excellent activities program which supports and enables students to attend activities on site and in the community.

It is clear that the students are given opportunities to experience events and occasions which enrich and develop their progress.

The level of individual support offered to the students is outstanding. Each student's needs and idiosyncrasies are known and the staff work very closely across the curriculum to ensure that they receive the support and nurturing they need.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Staff regularly consult young people about all aspects of their lives within boarding. Consultation takes place individually and collectively. The school council provides an effective vehicle for discussing issues of common concern. Informal meetings and discussions often take place within the boarding houses and during mealtimes. Pupils are also able to meet with teachers, key workers and to address issues in tutor groups or meetings in their living areas. Pupils are also able to approach senior members of staff who are present in the school, both during the day and in the evening. It is clear that the pupils are confident in expressing their opinions about how they are being cared for and that they feel their point of view is listened to and respected.

The school caters for pupils who have complex and at times, very challenging needs. The admission process and assessment is detailed and very carefully planned. The multi disciplinary approach operated by the school ensures that care staff, teachers, the family inclusion team (FIT) and other relevant professionals such as counsellors and psychologists combine to assess each pupil, and to decide if the school can meet their needs. Each pupil is assessed and individual packages are planned so that each pupil can achieve to their potential.

Once pupils reach year 11 the 24 curriculum operated by the school prepares the pupils to develop their life skills and to prepare for independence or further education. The sixth form provision, known as 'The Bothy' provides structure and support of an excellent standard which assists and enables pupils to develop life skills and achieve successful placements at college and work experience.

The process of admissions, discharges and ongoing assessments and monitoring of progress is of an outstanding quality.

Pupils are able to contact families and loved ones by using their own mobile telephones or by using the school telephone. Parents are welcome to visit and all pupils return home regularly to parents or guardians at weekends.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The pupils at the school enjoy the benefits of a beautiful country setting and space in the grounds to play and undertake activities. The school also has excellent facilities which include the sports hall, football and rugby pitches. The members of staff responsible for the maintenance of the school premises work extremely hard to ensure that the quality of the premises is maintained to an good level. The school is a large building and there is a rolling refurbishment plan to ensure that natural wear and tear is addressed. Additional to this rolling programme, the maintenance team respond promptly to repairing parts of the building which have been damaged.

The pupils who stay within the school live on floors which are split into family groups. Family groups consist of a mixture of age groups. Due to the size of the floors the pupils can spend time with age appropriate peer groups. The lounges and communal areas are homely and comfortable. The floors have kitchens where the pupils can eat tea on specific evenings and practice independence skills. Pupils are able to personalise their rooms and dormitory areas with posters and pictures and have sufficient storage space for their clothing and belongings.

The pupils have sufficient bathrooms and toilets facilities and staff have appropriate accommodation when sleeping in.

The renovation of the floors is a rolling programme and evidence of this could be seen in the areas that have already been refurbished to an excellent standard.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

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

The school has a variety of information linked to the Statement of Purpose including the pupils' guide to living on the floors and the induction book used by the family induction team. 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 comprehensive policies and procedures.

The overall management of the school systems is outstanding. The staff have worked very hard in the last year on the day-to-day management of the pupils and this was seen to have had impact, with changes in the development of the boarding practice. Staff said they feel supported by those around them the head of care and the Principal.

The care team comprises both those with experience and new staff who have been employed since the last inspection. The team are supported by the head of care and 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. There were very clear examples of how the induction process was being used. The school has clear lines of mandatory training such as first aid, safeguarding children, health and safety and behaviour management. All staff now undertake National Vocational Qualifications and have either passed or are currently undertaking the course.

The school has an overall comprehensive system in place for the monitoring of practice and safety issues. There is a Regulation 33 visitor who visits once every half term. Statistics of issues such as restraint, being absent without permission and behaviour management, are monitored and reviewed as part of looking at reducing such incidents as a whole.

The school has a strong management team and this is reflected throughout the whole of the school. Staff said they felt apart of the school and could contribute to the school's development. The school continues to evolve with new developmental plans and new initiatives.

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 restraint records contain all the details required by National Minimum Standards. (NMS 22.9)