

Southfield School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Merryl Wahogo
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Head / Principal	Michael Pedley
Date of last inspection	11 June 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

Southfield school is a purpose built secondary school for boys, aged 11-16, who have experienced behavioural and emotional difficulties. It accommodates up to 69 pupils, at any one time, 16 of whom may be resident in the hostel. Southfield school has its own grounds and is situated in a residential area not far from the Wokingham town centre.

Summary

This was the annual unannounced inspection. There have been massive improvements in most outcome areas, such that staying safe, enjoying and achieving, economic well-being and organisation have all been judged as outstanding. However, since there has to be a track record of excellence to achieve an overall outstanding judgement, this has not been possible on this occasion. Nevertheless, boys and staff are noticeably happier and more positive. In addition, to complying with recommendations from the previous report, the senior management team have taken a number of excellent initiatives.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The head of care has created a key for medicine administration records to explain when medication is not taken or administered. Equally, he ensures that staff adhere to it. There are also revised stock control records to provide a clearer audit trail.

Kitchen staff now place a basket of fruit by the counter every evening, as well as providing a salad option at lunch.

Staff have done a great deal of work on bullying and they and the boys now perceive bullying along the same lines.

The head of care has established a residents' council and unit meetings to give voice to boarders' opinions.

The chair of governors now monitors incidents and restraints regularly.

The head of care has implemented greatly improved methods for promoting equality and diversity in boarding.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The head of care has significantly improved procedures for administering medication, as well as the staff team's understanding of the need to be extremely diligent and thorough. As a result, staff now take every precaution to ensure the proper storage, recording and administration of medication. This is backed by thorough policies and procedures. They also support parents by ensuring that boys attend health appointments, such as immunisations and optician appointments. The school lacks, however, any significant input from the school nursing

service. As a result, staff are unable to monitor some aspects of healthy development. On the other hand, boys and their parents benefit from visits to the school by a sexual health worker.

There is widespread acknowledgment by boys and staff, that meals have improved greatly in quality and variety. In particular, the boys are pleased with the additional option of baked potatoes with a choice of fillings at tea time. In answer to the question, 'Do you think the meals at Southfield School provide you with a balanced diet', one boy said 'Unfortunately yes, as I want more chips and beef burgers.' Menus are also now more culturally varied and the boys are more open to non-English meals.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

In line with policies and procedures, staff keep confidential records securely and never discuss private matters publicly.

Staff record and respond to complaints, whether from boys or parents, promptly and thoroughly. The process of recording and dealing with boys' complaints has improved greatly. Staff now record, verbatim, what the boys say about their level of satisfaction with the outcome and most boys sign the record. This means that it is now possible to assess whether boys and staff agree about how well complaints are handled.

The head of care is the child protection lead for school and attends a forum for colleagues from other schools every term. He has been particularly instrumental in tightening up the communication lines between the local authority and the school. Staff are well trained and are aware of developments because of being such a small and tightly knit team. They appreciate the value of good relationships with parents and use home visits to help develop consistency between home and school. The establishment of a regular parent support group is an exceptionally good initiative, designed to further improve the boys' lives. All of this results in boys expressing a real sense of being kept safe.

Staff supported some of the boarders to produce an excellent DVD on bullying, which has won an award. The boys will be visiting Wembley Stadium as their prize. Boys confirm that there is little bullying within boarding and that staff deal with it well. This is evidenced by thorough recording, which shows that staff are sensitive as well as consistent in their approach. Careful and detailed recording allows staff to establish and monitor any trends. One boy states, 'The staff wouldn't let anything happen to me, they are trust worthy.' Another says, 'They stop us fighting and they stop bullying.' Staff found numerous ways of making a week of anti-bullying activities fun and memorable.

Absconding is at a low level considering the boys' difficulties and staff follow policy and procedures closely.

Staff and management agree that restorative practice/justice is the preferred direction for the development of behaviour management in the hostel. Nevertheless, boys do not complain about sanctions, which are proportionate. Staff record all incidents well and these cross reference perfectly with records of accidents, sanctions and, where appropriate, restraints. Senior staff analyse trends and use the information appropriately. It is easy to establish that restraints are appropriate because staff record all such incidents exceptionally thoroughly. As a result, boys benefit from appropriate and consistent behaviour management.

Boys are aware of their current targets and have various opportunities to discuss their progress. Staff address this with them daily in groups and in private with key workers. Boys are proud of the money that they can earn and save as a result of achieving their targets. In comparison with previous years, it is noticeable that they are much more positive and supportive towards each other.

Senior staff conduct thorough risk assessments, both for areas within the school and for activities. They ensure that these are reviewed and updated regularly. Staff and boys have a good understanding of evacuation procedures in response to fire alarms. They leave the building promptly and collect in an orderly fashion at the assembly point. The caretaker and head of care ensure thorough checks of all fire equipment are conducted and recorded at the necessary intervals. The caretaker is also thorough in his recording of other checks, such as water temperatures and responds efficiently when he becomes aware of any faults. He also oversees testing by external companies. As a result, boys are safe from environmental and fire hazards.

The kitchen staff keep all areas of the kitchen clean and tidy, with food stored exactly according to health and safety requirements. The kitchens are run by an external company who conduct their own monitoring, as well as the monitoring by the health and safety executive. As a result, they were awarded five stars following a 'scores on the doors' hygiene test.

This is a particularly stable staff group and as a result there has been no recruitment over the past year. Members of the senior management team have, nevertheless, demonstrated their commitment to ensuring the boys' safety by completing a safer recruiting course.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There is a very close working relationship between the head of care and the principal. As a result, the residential and teaching staff also work closely so that residential targets include behaviours that support educational progress. The senior management team are proud of the proportion of their young people who, on leaving school, enter either further education, employment or training.

The school continues to provide a good range of activities, which the boys enjoy. This is evidenced by a number of photos around the buildings. In recognition of the fact that most of the boys do not normally get the opportunity for holidays, staff provide an activity week in the summer holidays. The school provides both funding and staffing for this. The head of care has introduced termly diversity events. Staff and students report having thoroughly enjoyed a Caribbean week, and there are photos of boys' limbo dancing. Staff, however, are particularly enthusiastic about a week focused on Asia during which boys visited a local Islamic centre. This is because the boys asked and learnt so much and apparently became more positive about a variety of Asian foods.

There is an exciting development in progress in relation to providing emotional support and education. This follows the offer to the school of funding from the teenage and adolescent mental health service (TAMHS). It involves the provision of outside support, such as counselling, as well as a framework for improving the school's capacity to promote emotional development. Senior staff have taken it up enthusiastically and are working on how to dovetail this with the social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programme. Boys already benefit greatly from

the work on SEAL in addition to support such as anger management sessions and input from external therapists.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The head of care has now established termly residential council meetings and half termly senior and junior group meetings. This means boys can discuss solely residential issues, as well as being able to represent boarding at the school council. Boys clearly appreciate these opportunities and staff have been impressed by some very sensible suggestions. For example, one boy was proud of having suggested coat hooks for their bedroom doors and was rewarded with being able to shop for these with the head of care. Boys have also used these meetings as an opportunity to influence the menus.

Staff ensure that new boys are introduced to boarding in a thorough fashion. They do this by working through an induction list rather similar to one they might use for a new member of staff. As a result, new boys tend to be very positive and settle in quickly. Additionally, as boys approach leaving age, staff help them and their families by supporting them to return to sleeping at home. This follows college on a week night. They communicate well with parents to establish how successful this reintegration into family life is working and respond accordingly.

The head of care has improved care plans, which are based on local authority assessments and follow home visits. They now have photos of both the boys and their key workers, as well as details about how to address all their needs. This includes cultural and religious needs. Staff ensure regular reviews and updates on these care plans and these are underpinned by good communication with parents and carers. As a result, boys benefit from staff having great clarity about their needs.

Young people are with their families every weekend and are free to speak to them on their phones in the evenings.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Staff begin to address transitional issues, in relation to future study or work, when boys are 14. This is very good practice because transition can be a lengthy and difficult issue.

There are enough bedrooms, showers and toilets to ensure that boys can maintain their privacy at all times. Furthermore, all the bathrooms have been refurbished and are now of an excellent quality. Staff report that this encourages boys to make better use of bathrooms, which is good for their self esteem.

All areas of the hostel are now furnished to a high standard and the field and gardens continue to be well maintained. Boys work with staff to grow vegetables, some of which are used in domestic science lessons. There is a new fitness suite which boys can access in the evening, as well as the gym and other areas of the school. Pictures, books and other items in the boarding areas reflect diversity. For example, one unit has a book on display about Yao Ming, a Chinese basketball star. The games room provides a wide range of possible activities, including computers. This means boys can enjoy a stimulating environment during boarding hours.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Staff are broadening the boys' outlooks across all areas of cultural and religious life, by truly engaging them. For example, boys were encouraged and allowed to explore real concerns on their visit to an Islamic centre. Staff use sessions in physical, social, health and emotional well-being, as well as three weeks of special events a year, as a springboard for this process. They also involve parents by sending diversity week newsletters, which is an innovative way to support the learning that takes place in school.

The senior management team consulted all their staff in order to best develop their vision for the school and have updated their Statement of Purpose accordingly. They have also reviewed all their policies and procedures and updated some.

As this is a highly committed staff group, they have pulled together to cover one person's long term sickness rather than take on agency staff. The head of care and the principal actively support this, as do some teaching staff doing odd evenings in residential. As a result, staff are comfortable with the arrangement. In fact, the staff team are at their most cohesive for several years. This means that boys benefit from staff who know them well and are confident in their work.

The school ensures that staff can access relevant training, as well as required courses. For example, staff have attended courses on various behavioural disorders, in addition to completing National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ). As a result, they maintain their enthusiasm and boys benefit from this positive attitude.

Senior staff provide good formal and informal supervision and record this well. This contributes to staff well-being and the strength of the team. The head of care monitors all records regularly. In addition, the chair of governors provides her own monitoring during visits, which occur more frequently than the standards require. As a result, boys know her well and benefit from close scrutiny of staff practice.

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):

- approach the school nursing service with a view to their providing ongoing access, rather than on a case by case basis. (NMS 14)