

Wolverdene Special School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Clare Davies
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Date of last inspection	8 July 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

Wolverdene is a local authority school within Hampshire catering for primary age children experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school provides mainly day placements, but 10 weekly residential placements are available for boys within The Lodge, which is a separate unit located within the school grounds. The Lodge accommodation consists of six single and two double rooms with shared facilities.

Summary

This announced inspection focused on all the key national minimum standards for residential special schools. The school provides good outcomes for boarders; four recommendations have been made in relation to being healthy and staying safe.

The residential provision provides a safe environment with clear boundaries that are consistently applied by the staff. Boarders like staying at The Lodge where they can take part in varied activities, play with friends and get plenty of physical exercise. Staff encourage boys to be involved in decision making about themselves and the running of The Lodge. Boarders are encouraged and supported in taking responsibility for their behaviour and understand there may be consequences. The residential staff have a positive attitude to their work and they value their teamwork, the training opportunities and the management support.

Boarders report positively about their stay at The Lodge with comments such as, 'It's nice because the staff are good at keeping us safe' and 'It is a good place to live'. A parent stated, 'The staff look at the whole needs of the child and address these needs very effectively.'

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were two recommendations made at the last inspection to improve practice in the outcome area of staying safe. Both of them have been satisfactorily addressed; however, a new recommendation relating to the recording of physical interventions has been made following this inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The residential provision takes good care of the physical and emotional health needs of the boarders. All staff are trained in first aid and there are policies and procedures to follow. Medication is securely stored and documented in and out of The Lodge. There is some inconsistent practice in the administration of medication to the boarders where some staff are handling the medication; this could pose a risk of contamination. Records are made of any accidents in The Lodge and separately in the main school. One omission was noted in the school record where a child had been treated with a cold compress. Importantly the child had received the treatment; however, the records were incomplete.

The school offers therapeutic support through anger management group work, play therapy, music therapy and liaison with community child and adolescent mental health services. Such

services help pupils with their emotional and behavioural development. The residential staff support boarders who engage with these therapies and are able to promote such intervention by using suggested strategies. Routine and individual care plans help boarders with their personal hygiene. There are lots of physical activities to participate in to promote an active lifestyle.

The Lodge offers a suitable menu that varies each week. Boarders contribute to the selection and thoroughly enjoy the food provided. The evening meal lacks choice though boarders can choose a sandwich as an alternative. There is always fresh fruit available and the boarders have recently planted some fruit, vegetables and herbs with the aim of growing some of their own produce. One boarder reported on how they were encouraged to eat a healthy diet: 'You have to have some vegetables on your plate and eat them otherwise you don't get pudding.' Meals are taken around a big table, it is a very sociable occasion with polite conversation and good table manners. The boarders contribute by setting and clearing tables and occasionally helping prepare the food.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The staff provide an appropriate balance to ensuring boarders have some privacy while being adequately supervised. Most boarders have a single room and they all have a personal locker to safely store their possessions. Personal care needs are managed well with discretion to respect the dignity of individuals. Boarders feel secure with residential staff and this was supported by one boarder stating, 'If you have something wrong you can tell them and they will keep it private.'

There are procedures for making formal complaints; none have been received at The Lodge for some years. This is indicative of the strength of the relationships between boarders and staff where issues can be readily raised. There is an open culture of discussion regarding behaviour impacting on others; circle time encourages problems to be aired and solutions found. Residential staff encourage boarders to help each other and take responsibility for their behaviour.

All school staff are trained on safeguarding issues and how to respond to any concerns about children. There is a designated person to liaise with the local safeguarding board and this school benefits from having a social worker on site. Throughout the school and The Lodge safeguarding matters are monitored and there is regular reporting to the governing body. To counter any bullying behaviour there are regular talks during circle time, assemblies and through the curriculum. A few boarders reported that bullying happened sometimes on the school playground but overall they feel safe and provided comments such as: 'The adults and kids look out for me and care for me' and 'The adults sort out incidents'. When asked, 'What do you think of your school?' a boarder replied, 'It is nice because the staff are good at keeping us safe.'

There is an emphasis on praise and reward for positive behaviour. The boarders generally respond very well to this approach and are proud to receive acknowledgment and praise. At the end of the school day around the dining table, each boarder reports on their day in school. Staff acknowledge any difficulties but counter this with praise for any sign of trying to get back on track with their behaviour. Boarders are asked to contribute to the group any tips for achieving good grades and reports. Significant achievement can be awarded with spontaneous applause from the group. The boarders have implemented a reward system that they thought of doing for each other. Tokens can be given from one boarder to another for some positive

input such as an act of kindness, playing nicely and for being helpful and supportive. The accumulation of tokens leads to a treat at the end of the term. Each week the residential staff select a 'star of the week' and this is announced in the whole school assembly. Privileges for such a position include choosing the meal and a DVD film one evening and having the opportunity to be first on activities. This position is to be aspired to by the rest of the group and the 'star' has a responsibility to set a good example.

There are systems in place to manage challenging behaviour and all staff are trained in methods of de-escalation and physical intervention. Records are made when there is an intervention by staff; these are held in a bound book forming one central record across the school and The Lodge. Central records enable the headteacher to monitor records and produce summary reports to the governing body. Some records lack sufficient detail such as the behaviour requiring the use of physical intervention and the nature of the intervention used. At The Lodge appropriate sanctions may be used such as an early bedtime or missing a planned activity. Sanctions are considered to be fair by boarders and the records show that not many sanctions are necessary.

School site security has improved with a new reception area and fencing. Environmental and fire risk assessments are in place and reviewed at least annually. Records show that fire drills and evacuations occur at varied times to ensure staff and students know how to respond and this was confirmed by boarders. Induction programmes for new staff and boarders cover fire evacuation procedures, and fire safety training is undertaken by staff. Employment procedures follow safer recruitment guidance although one omission was noted. To address the shortfall safeguards were implemented to reduce the impact on boarders until all the suitability checks were received. All visitors are required to sign in and be escorted around the school and The Lodge.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The residential experience provides the opportunity for boarders to develop personal and social skills. This helps them with their independence, their self-esteem and to form positive relationships with their peers and adults. A parent reported on The Lodge saying, 'It gives them a sense of being connected to other children and a more social connection with the school and a sense of belonging.' There are two handover points throughout the school day where teaching and care staff can share aspects of the boarders' day. Some care staff provide support in the classrooms and some education staff work in the residential setting. These arrangements and good communication between the education and residential teams contribute to the consistency and continuity of care, and the effective management of boarders.

The security of the school grounds provides opportunities for boarders to get engaged with sporting activities and outdoor play. Some off-site activities are planned throughout the week and the boarders enjoy their free time in The Lodge with the use of a games room, games consoles, music, board games and DVD films.

Individual support is available from a variety of sources within the school to meet the boarders' special needs. Residential staff, the school social worker, teaching staff and therapists work together to provide the most appropriate support tailored to the individual. Key workers spend time with boarders helping them in making progress towards their personal targets. The Lodge has some specialist resources to support key working such as card games, board games and interactive toys. The boarders report that they can talk to the residential staff about any

difficulties they may be experiencing. One boarder said, 'If you say, can I have a talk to a grown up they always will.' In addition to the residential staff there are two nominated governors who visit at least twice a month. Professional support outside the school is arranged where appropriate with the involvement of parents. The boarders learn self-care skills and how to contribute to the running of The Lodge. With the support of the residential staff, boarders are encouraged to transfer these skills into their family home.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

There are formal opportunities where boarders are consulted such as the school council and circle time. Views are gathered informally through group discussion in The Lodge, classrooms and on a more individual level with staff. Changes made as a result of listening to boarders have included purchasing some outdoor play equipment, arranging some new activities and introducing a rewards system as devised by the boarders. Boarders are actively involved in any review meetings and encouraged to express their views.

The school social worker undertakes home visits prior to pupils joining the school. This ensures that full information is gathered from parents, carers and the children themselves in order that the staff can plan how to best meet their needs. A care plan is produced for each boarder to identify how the school will meet individual needs in relation to health, behaviour, social skills, and leisure interests. Targets are set in consultation with boarders, and key workers monitor progress in these areas.

Boarders are able to freely maintain contact with their families through The Lodge telephone. Parents are able to contact their children at reasonable times and visit by arrangement. Residential and education staff maintain good communication with parents through telephone contact, diaries and newsletters. The head of care and deputy at The Lodge are trained to deliver parenting programmes to individuals and groups. This provides excellent support to families and enables parents to transfer the behaviour strategies from school into the home, providing consistent responses. Parents responded positively when asked what they think the school needs to improve when looking after pupils who board: 'Very little. I think they do an excellent job.' Another parent replied, 'I think they do a wonderful job as it already runs.'

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The residential unit is a separate building to the school within the grounds. The Lodge provides a homely environment with comfortable furnishings. The lounge and dining room provide sufficient space for the group and additional play rooms are available for specific activities and individual time with an adult. Double and single rooms are suitably furnished and boarders can decorate their bedrooms with posters and personal belongings. The accommodation is well maintained and furnished to a reasonably good standard. A programme of redecoration is planned.

The Lodge has a pleasant outdoor area with a patio and lawn. Boarders like to play outside, maintain a small vegetable garden, observe pond life and enjoy barbeques.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Assemblies and discussions involve a celebration of world faiths and cultural events. Boarders and day pupils are encouraged to support charitable events and have undertaken some fundraising for local people and worldwide disasters such as earthquakes. Wolverdene School is involved in a global school partnership project with a school in Uganda. Displays, maps and discussions centred around the World Cup football tournament promote an interest into many different countries and their cultural diversities.

There is a school prospectus, and for boarders and their parents there is a dedicated handbook on the residential provision. There are very good staffing levels providing sound care and supervision for the boarders. Any staff absences are covered from within the residential team or the school staff team to ensure consistency of care. There are good arrangements in place for access to senior management for advice and support when needed. Staff report that they feel very well supported in their work through clear policies, teamwork, strong management and good training opportunities.

Most residential staff have achieved a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 and the remaining two staff are being supported as they study for this award. The head of care and the deputy have achieved NVQ at level 4. The school has systems in place to monitor care practice and records; this identifies any patterns or trends that may need addressing. There is a designated governor for the boarding provision who visits and talks with boarders and staff. The local authority requires the school to provide some records and information in order that there can be some analysis and comparison with other schools. This provides some external monitoring.

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 the policy and written guidance are implemented in practice for administering and storing medication (NMS 14.17)
- ensure that a written record is kept of all significant illnesses, accidents or injuries to children during their placement at school (NMS 14.22)
- ensure that the school provides training for staff in safe and appropriate physical intervention techniques with children, and the circumstances in which they may be used. In particular this relates to staff training on the correct recording of any such intervention (NMS 10.12)
- ensure robust procedures are applied to all areas of recruitment. (NMS 27)