

St Anne's Community Special School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Fiona Parker
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Address	St Anne's Special School St Helens Drive Welton Brough HU15 1NR
Telephone number	01482 667379
Email	
Registered person	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Head of care	Michael Stubbins
Head / Principal	Michael Stubbins
Date of last inspection	10 November 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

This is a local authority school. It is situated in its own grounds in a village to the west of a large city. Access is available to public transport, shops and leisure facilities.

The school caters for pupils from two to 16 years of age. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and have severe learning difficulties, or profound and multiple learning difficulties.

Within the residential unit, boarding facilities are offered to the children who attend the school and would benefit from the 24 hour curriculum. Children board on one or two nights each week and are also able to board at weekends. The residence is open throughout the year, apart from two weeks in the summer and some days during the Christmas and new year period and all bank holiday weekends.

Boarding is provided in a single storey block adjacent to the main school with accommodation provided in single and shared bedrooms. The unit is separated into areas, each with bathing and toilet facilities, a lounge, dining room and kitchen area. The residence also has a light/sensory room, a soft play room, a computer and games room.

Summary

This is a key announced inspection focusing on the key standards under the Every Child Matters outcome areas of being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution and economic well-being. In addition, key standards under organisation were also assessed.

This is a good service overall with outstanding aspects in the outcome areas of being healthy and staying safe. Equality and diversity is also judged as good.

Children and young people are clearly viewed as unique individuals and plans reflect their needs, likes and dislikes in detail. Children and young people benefit from positive relationships with staff who understand their individual needs. Medical needs and procedures are clear, staff are appropriately trained and provide excellent care. In addition, excellent multi-agency approaches are in place to support health and medical needs. Robust systems and recording ensure practice is accountable and effectively monitored.

Safeguarding, health and welfare in all aspects of residence are paramount. Excellent policies and procedures are in place which staff follow in practice. This ensures children are safeguarded and any changes in their health and welfare quickly communicated. The senior management team have particularly focused on broadening safeguarding practice through all aspects of care and ensuring robust systems are in place. The vast majority of parents report positively on the support for their child from using the residence in the school.

As a result of this inspection there are five recommendations to improve practice. The medication policy needs to be followed on every occasion in relation to disposing of unused medicines. All new staff should receive supervision fortnightly. Monitoring reports do not include where staff and children have contributed during visits. Although children's complaints are individually well recorded there is no overview of the number and nature of children's complaints. These shortfalls do not impact upon children and young people's welfare.

A recommendation from a previous inspection remains in place. This relates to the height of door handles on three doors. Although this is in a specific area, there is some potential that this restriction could impact on some children not in need of this.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous inspection identified five recommendations. All staff are trained in appropriate physical interventions and records now include the names of all staff and witnesses. Changes have been made to two toilet areas; this significantly modernises this and provides privacy for children. Work on the third toilet area will take place in the summer break. This is not to disrupt the residence during children's stays. Improvements have been made to monitoring visits and the quality of reports. This recommendation is partly met.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people benefit from excellent multi-agency approaches to their health care. Strong links with parents and a range of health professionals ensure young people's health needs are well met. Excellent vigilance and robust monitoring ensure any health changes are quickly noted. As a result, timely meetings take place to review medicines and strategies to support changes in behaviours. Young people's health and welfare needs are clearly understood and thorough plans detail their individual needs. This includes any instruction for emergency and hospital treatment. Staff demonstrate in-depth understanding of each individual child. This clearly promotes positive health and welfare in the interests of children and young people during their stays.

Parents, overall, are responsible for health needs and provide consents for treatments for their children during their stay. Particular instructions from parents are clearly recorded and inform the health plans. In relation to health needs, one parent's comments include: 'I have found their communication excellent', and another parent said: 'Overall I am very happy.'

Excellent systems are in place to monitor any accidents or first aid assistance. This ensures young people receive prompt attention and their health and welfare are a priority. In addition, the thorough records contribute to the overall monitoring of health, welfare and safety. One health professional comments: 'They are very good at flagging things up.' The majority of staff are qualified in first aid and all staff are well trained to meet the health and medical needs of residents.

A thorough and accountable system is in place for administering and storing medicines. The responsibilities for medicines are at senior level. Children and young people who are able and where appropriate, can make some choices about how they take their medicines. The majority of unused medicines are returned to parents; however, on a few occasions this has not happened in line with the policy. This results in a recommendation.

Being healthy and physically active are part of the day-to-day routine in residence. For example, each morning starts with a 'wake up and shake up' to music. Walks, swimming and table tennis all encourage physical activity and changes in activities each term ensure variety.

Young people enjoy meals which offer variety and choices during their stay. Individual likes and dislikes are clearly in records and put into practice at meals. Special diets and weight monitoring to increase or reduce weight are all catered for and supported by staff. While chips are a popular favourite, children are encouraged with healthy options. Menus reflect that balanced and healthy options are available. An excellent system between the kitchen and staff ensures good communication for individual needs.

Meal times are busy but orderly and social occasions. Children clearly benefit from the consistent routine in place. Assistance with appropriate choices and eating is available for those who need this. Children and young people are encouraged to be helpful and kind to others during meal times.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Excellent measures are in place to promote safety and welfare for children and young people in all aspects of their care and experiences. Considerable effort has taken place to liaise closely with the local authority and review the safeguarding procedures. This results in clear and accountable systems which are clearly understood by staff. Daily monitoring is in place to ensure appropriate actions and decisions take place where necessary and in line with policy and procedure. Multi-agency meetings including parents, discuss and share information to ensure good communication. In addition, there are clear and robust policies for managing complaints, bullying and unauthorised absences. Overall, children and young people benefit from a robust approach to welfare and safeguarding which fully considers their holistic needs.

Excellent and thorough risk assessments ensure risks for individuals, within all aspects of their stay in residence, are minimised. These are regularly reviewed to ensure any changes are fully included and strategies updated. The mix of children and the sleeping arrangements fully take account of welfare and safety. Robust recruitment checks take place and any visitors are appropriately checked and vetted. This ensures only suitable adults have access to children and young people within residence.

The rights of children and young people in respect of their privacy and dignity are clearly understood. Staff provide sensitive, intimate care for children and young people in private areas. The preferences of children and gender of staff are fully considered in all care routines. Young people, where appropriate, learn about their personal privacy to encourage their understanding and skills to keep safe. In addition, changes to toilet areas have significantly improved privacy. Confidential information is appropriately secure.

Parental concerns and complaints are appropriately recorded and wherever possible, quickly responded to. Records show there are very few. Concerns expressed by children and young people are taken seriously and a 'cause for concern' form is completed to enable an accountable and considered response. There are excellent individual records; however, an overview of all children's complaints is not available to monitor any trends or patterns. As all issues are monitored in the 'cause for concern' process this does not impact upon children and young people.

Children and young people benefit from excellent structured approaches to managing behaviours. Robust individual plans detail the individual behaviours, needs and targets of each resident. Clear strategies are in place and staff are consistent in their approach with young people. This

evidences excellent communication between the staff team and thorough knowledge of young people's plans. Excellent and accountable records are kept of all interventions. There are strong links between practice, policy and procedure and management monitoring which result in excellent practice overall.

Physical safety is well managed with regular fires drills taking place and all the required safety checks on equipment and electrical items. Good progress is in place with recommendations from a fire audit, with almost the full complement of fire doors replaced. This ensures a physically safe environment.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Excellent communication is in place between the school and residence promoting consistent support for children and young people. This happens daily, in both formal handover sessions and informally, in response to any significant changes which need to be shared. In addition, the acting headteacher and head of care work very closely to promote progress in a 24 hour approach to learning. Link workers contribute good reports from observations and progress in residence to the education review process. Staff report good communication and consistency between residence and school. In addition, positive comments have been received from parents/carers: 'I cannot praise the school or residence enough. It's nice to know your child is cared for and loved.'

A varied and creative activity programme is in place. This includes a range of in-house activities and options in the community. Children and young people are involved in choosing activities and clearly look forward to taking part. A weekly activity for each term is planned, for example, swimming last term and table tennis this term. In addition, residents enjoy a themed monthly youth club night at a local school. Young people enjoyed music, drawing, reading with workers, watering plants and watching television during this visit.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from good relationships with staff, supported by a largely consistent and long-term staff team. Some relationships have developed over a number of years enabling children and young people to feel comfortable and settled in residence. This supports children's individual expression and communication as they are understood as individuals. Robust plans support the good care levels, and clear strategies support young people to progress. Staff support children and young people consistently in line with plans.

Effective link worker arrangements provide accountability for monitoring and planning progress.

As this school provides short stays, contact with home can be instigated by parents or young people depending on their needs and wishes. The use of a telephone is available for children and young people. One comment from a parent supports this: 'Residence is excellent - the carers/staff do a fantastic job, are helpful and always happy to give plenty of communication.'

Young people are encouraged to exercise choices throughout their stay in residence. Young people can make day-to-day choices regarding food and activities. In addition, they are consulted

on future activities and changes in residence through more structured residence meetings, for example, choosing youth club theme nights and naming a resident pet.

A structured assessment process identifies children who may benefit from stays in residence and the support on offer with their individual targets. Introductions are planned in line with individual needs and the outcome of assessment, for example, tea visits prior to an overnight stay. Parents visit the residence and staff to discuss their child's needs. Transition meetings take place for those children moving on and information is available to help them understand the changes. Staff are sensitive to the impact for young people, offering reassurance and consistency during such times.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Improvements have been made to the residence. Two new toilet areas significantly improve privacy, and another toilet area will be refurbished in the summer holiday. The programme to renew all fire doors is almost complete to comply with safety requirements. General maintenance and redecoration takes place. One parent commented: 'Whenever we have visited, the school/residence always seems clean.'

Children and young people have free access in the majority of areas. Although a number of double-handled doors have been removed, three doors with high handles remain. As identified at the previous inspection, this is to safeguard some young people. However, it is not clear if this is in individual plans and does not result in restricting other children and young people.

Although not purpose built, the accommodation is sufficient for short stays. Appropriate sleeping arrangements and washing facilities are available. The areas are bright, clean and suitably furnished. Art work and projects are on display and toys and games easily at hand. Separate television rooms and lounges are available for designated groups to use.

Young people are supported with moving on, usually to schools offering post-16 education. Transition meetings plan for such moves and staff sensitively support any anxieties and provide the reassurance which young people need.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Creative links are in place with local schools and a school in India. This involves visits from teachers in India. Pupils from local schools support pupils at this school to take part in the exchange programme. This promotes inclusion in the community and positive links. Children and young people benefit from good individual support and relationships in residence. Robust individual plans outline likes, dislikes and preferences of all residents. Systems are in place to evaluate activities to ensure these are available fairly and children can benefit from them. Clear policies are in place on inclusive practice and parental involvement. Consultations take place with children and parents to share their views about the school and residence. This is good practice.

An appropriate prospectus informs parents about the school and the residence. There are plans to review this and include further information. Children receive a good pictorial guide which includes signs to tell them about the residence.

Good records chart children's progress and experience during stays to inform their overall plans. Children are cared for by staff who are mainly very experienced. In addition, staff are appropriately qualified in caring for children and young people. Senior staff have undertaken further National Qualification Awards at level 4. Appropriate training and advice from health professionals are routinely available. This results in a well-qualified and experienced staff team. The manager is well qualified and experienced to manage and lead the team.

Staff report they are very well supported in their roles, with regular supervision and an induction programme for new staff. A minor shortfall was noted in the frequency of supervision sessions for new staff.

Good internal monitoring systems are in place across the residence and the delegations of roles and responsibilities are clear. This ensures the residence is well run and accountable. Excellent records are kept which detail the needs, plans and care children and young people receive during their stays.

External monitoring by a governor takes place which includes a good overview of welfare as required in the standards. However, it is not always clear if staff and children have contributed during the visits and that their views are reflected in the reports.

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 a written record is kept of all medication. In particular, the disposal of any medication not returned to parents as per pharmaceutical guidelines (NMS 14.4)
- ensure the school complaints procedure enables children to make both minor and major complaints. In particular, issues raised by children which are considered to be complaints are collated so specific overall monitoring of children's complaints can take place (NMS 4.3)
- review the use of high handles on doors; these should only be used in relation to a child where the restriction has been agreed within their placement plan, and are only used where necessary to satisfactorily safeguard and promote a child's welfare. Such restrictions do not impose similar restrictions on other children (NMS 23.8)
- ensure new staff receive one-to-one supervision at least fortnightly for the first two terms of their employment (NMS 30.2)
- ensure opportunities for any child or member of staff who wish to meet the visitor (in private if they wish). In particular, the report includes evidence that opportunities are

provided during visits and any appropriate outcome for monitoring purposes and actions is included. (NMS 33.3)