

Ratcliffe School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Christina Maddison
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Head/ Principal	
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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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

Ratcliffe School is a Local Authority provision for young people aged between eight to 17 years of mixed gender, who have emotional and behavioural difficulties, many of whom have been identified as being on the autistic spectrum. The school provides education and boarding provision for 31 young people, with a further 10 young people boarding on a part-time basis. In addition, the school provides education for day students and off site education for four young people.

The school and five residential boarding houses are all on the same campus. All children and young people have a single bedroom. All boarding areas have kitchenettes, dining and sitting areas.

The school has grounds of approximately 10 acres. Young people have the use of hard and soft play areas.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

The purpose of this announced key inspection was to check that the national minimum standards have been met.

There are many very good and outstanding features to the care that is provided for children and young people at the school. The children and young people are looked after by a competent and committed staff team who clearly enjoy looking after them. Relationships between the children, young people and staff were seen to be warm and nurturing. Support provided by the school for children and their families outside of school time is excellent. The children benefit from consistent behaviour management from staff that ensures that the children and young people are able to achieve behavioural aims and targets that are set for them each term. The recent refurbishment programme has had a positive impact on the children and young people, who consider that this is their home when they stay at the school Monday to Friday in term time. Children and young people are provided with some excellent activities, which they thoroughly enjoy, ranging from crabbing and magic walks to Judo and army cadets.

A minor shortfall was identified, although fire drills do take place twice a term, they are not held at the beginning of term for new children to the school to ensure that they know what action to take in the event of a fire.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no recommendations made at the previous inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

There are excellent arrangements for promoting the healthy lives of children and young people at the school. Staff work very well in partnership with families to ensure that children and young people receive continuous health care. The support for children and young people who have emotional health care needs is creative and provides excellent support for the children and their families. The staff are pro active in liaising with health professionals to obtain services such as input from the diabetic nurse and medical Consultants to ensure that any identified health needs are met. There are good, well kept records of children's health needs and required support. This helps staff work effectively with parents and health workers to ensure the children and young people's health is promoted and protected. All staff are trained in first aid to provide appropriate help if there are any accidents and there are well-equipped first aid boxes situated in each accommodation block.

There are suitable medication procedures to help ensure that the children and young people get their medication at the right times. Medication is administered by a suitably qualified member of staff to ensure that this important aspect of the children and young people's care is completed effectively.

There is a good variety of healthy, well balanced meals on offer at the school. Young people are encouraged to budget, shop and cook for meals as part of their preparation for leaving the school. Meals are calm, well ordered social occasions and children and young people eat together with staff. This creates a pleasant setting where children and young people can discuss their day with the staff, thereby promoting positive relationships.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

When staying overnight at the school, the children and young people benefit from a stable environment that helps them to meet their individual aims and objectives. The school has clear procedures and processes to safeguard the children and young people and these are fully understood by the staff. All staff have benefitted from safeguarding training that has further increased knowledge in this area. Bullying is not tolerated and on the rare occasion an incidence of bullying occurs, it is immediately and effectively dealt with by the staff. All complaints are taken seriously and thorough processes are followed with outcomes clearly recorded. Privacy is respected and children and young people report they are confident that their bedroom space is respected. Children and young people comment that they feel safe, are confident that they will not experience bullying and staff will support them

at any time.

Unauthorised absences are rare and procedures are in place to respond to absences and records show that any brief periods where young people remove themselves are clearly recorded. Staff are proactive in resolving situations and maintaining high levels of individual care. Staff work positively and consistently with young people to avoid situations escalating and any physical interventions are used only as a last resort to keep all involved safe. A positive approach to behaviour from staff at all times is encouraged. Children and young people can earn merit tokens for positive behaviour to exchange for rewards. Any sanctions imposed are fair, proportionate and discussed with the child or young person involved.

Children and young people's safety in the school is promoted with the use of risk assessments which identify potential individual risks for each young person. Measures to minimise risk are in place and the actions for staff to take are very clear. Discussions in relation to potential risks happen between staff at the regular staff meetings. This ensures all staff are clear about their responsibilities and actions that they should take to ensure the child or young person's safety. There are no window restrictors in place on some windows on the first floor as these have been designated as fire escapes. However, the risk has been assessed and risk assessments are in place.

Records show that regular fire drills and equipment checks happen, although there has not been a fire drill at the start of this term for the children who have just started at the school. However, children spoken with were clear about what action to take if there was a fire.

Robust procedures are in place to ensure that only suitable persons are employed. Files evidence that staff have enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks and the standards for safe recruitment are fully met.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There is outstanding individual support for young people, education is promoted, and there is a wide range of activities on offer at the school for the children and young people.

Each young person has a placement plan clearly identifying how individual needs will be supported. Staff provide excellent care and are very knowledgeable about each young person's individual needs and how best to support them. There is excellent practice with regard to encouraging the children and young people who have been identified as being on the autistic spectrum to communicate and make choices as part of their care and support. Staff help to promote the children's understanding of their lives and social expectations that will help them to achieve in the future. There are good links with other health and social care agencies providing further specialist support regarding the management of behaviour and promoting health. The families

of the children and young people are well supported by the school, for example, staff at the school provide help and support if there are any traumatic events in a family that may affect the well-being of a child or young person.

The 24 hour curriculum is promoted at the school and education is actively promoted. There are very good links between the school and care staff to ensure consistency of care and good communication.

Staff actively encourage the children and young people to get involved in a very good range of activities on the school site and out in the community. There is a good range of resources in the school such as books, toys, computers, an outside play area and the extensive woods and grounds. There are regular trips out and support to use local leisure facilities. Young people can travel independently and enjoy free time away from the school site if it is assessed as appropriate and they can access community facilities. As a result, they will develop their sense of independence and responsibility.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Outstanding assessment of need and placement planning guides ensure that staff provide high quality care to children and young people. Individually tailored plans ensure that every aspect of a child's development is assessed and regularly reviewed. Behavioural targets are set each term and constantly monitored and reviewed. Targets are personalised to ensure that the children and young people take small steps to success at their own pace. This is a highly successful method of supporting the children and young people to learn and develop new skills.

Children and young people at the school are encouraged to give their views and opinions about the school. This is mainly through the school council, whose representatives are elected by the children and young people. The school council has recently proposed that the children and young people needed a new ball court and decking area for barbeques and these facilities have recently been built. House meetings are held every term and children and young people said they thought that they are able to comment on all aspects of living at the school. Parents report that the school provides a very high standard of care.

The support for contact with families is outstanding. The school has developed a support worker role. This ensures that families are very well supported and there is very good communication with the school regarding all aspects of a child or young person's education and care. Prior to admission to the school there is a pre-admission assessment and meeting to ensure that the school is able to meet the needs of the child or young person.

Staff are calm, relaxed, patient and non-judgemental in the way they interact with young people so that children and young people are comfortable and secure in their

relationships. Children and young people report that they are happy in the home and well looked after by the staff whom they like.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The accommodation in the school has benefitted from a programme of refurbishment and provides a homely, comfortable and well-furnished environment for the children and young people to live in when they are staying at the school. Bedrooms are highly personalised, clean and well maintained. Children and young people said they could not think how the accommodation could be improved and were happy staying there.

Young people are prepared for independence by living in a designated accommodation block prior to leaving the school where they are encouraged to be as independent as possible. They are able to budget, prepare and cook their own meals and have independent free time if appropriate.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children and young people are supported by a dedicated and stable staff team. The staff team are very comfortable with their roles and responsibilities and deploy them respectfully in the interest of the children and young people's welfare. There is an excellent rapport established between the children, young people and the staff that allows for professional trust and friendship to be embedded into day-to-day care. Children and young people were happy with their care. The deployment of staff is highly effective to meet the needs of the children and young people.

The staff team receive excellent training opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge. Also, staff members receive regular supervision that enables them to receive guidance and support to sustain professional development. Children and young people are able to see Governors to give their views and opinions about life at the school.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good through the exceptional contribution the school makes towards meeting the diverse care and learning needs of the children and young people at the school. This stems from the well-established staff team that provides children and young people with continuity of care and learning support. This significantly helps in securing young people's attainment and in helping them reach their full potential. There is strong leadership and management at the school to ensure that staff are directed and supported in a positive way for the benefit of the children and young people.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Compliance with national minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- ensure that all children who are new to the school participate in a fire drill at night at the beginning of term. (NMS 26)