

Grateley House School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Lucy Martin
Type of inspection	Key

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Date of last inspection	04/02/2010

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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

Grateley House is an independent residential special school that is part of Cambian Education Services, a national company that specialises in providing residential care and education for young people on the autistic spectrum. The school provides co-educational termly residential care and education for students from nine to 19 years of age with Asperger Syndrome and associated difficulties within the autistic spectrum. The school has 42 residential places and a small number of day placements. The school's residential provision comprises seven separate house bases, each accommodating six students, some within the main school building which was previously a large country house, and some purpose-built within the school grounds. The school has recently been successful in registering a post-16 home within the Salisbury community, which provides a further nine residential places. This is inspected separately by the Care Quality Commission. At the time of the inspection the majority of house bases were of mixed gender. Two of the purpose-built house bases on site accommodate post-16 students who undertake a 'Moving On' programme. The school provides an extensive range of therapeutic support services for students.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was an announced inspection during which all the standards identified by Ofsted as key areas were inspected. Grateley House school provides outstanding standards of care in all the areas assessed.

There is excellent leadership and management at the school and effective monitoring of practice. The education, care and therapy teams work exceptionally well together to ensure that the school has the welfare of the students at its centre. The students' health needs are well met and they are kept safe from harm. There are excellent systems in place to manage and improve behaviour and to assess risk. Students feel involved and listened to by staff who care about them and who know them well. Individual care plans are of high quality and there is an emphasis on further development and improvement throughout the school. As one student said 'this school has enabled me to become the person I really am'.

Although staff feel well supported and there are formal supervision sessions for experienced staff, one recommendation was made to ensure that there is evidence that new staff are supervised as regularly as indicated in the relevant national minimum standard.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no recommendations made at the previous inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The physical, emotional and mental health needs of students are identified and met to a high standard. The students' medical history and specific needs are identified prior to admission and are well documented in the student's placement plan. The school has a school nurse who is responsible for the treatment of minor ailments and injuries as well as for the organisation of the medication which is administered to students. All medication is securely stored and the administration recording is of a high standard. All the records have photographs of the students and there are appropriate safeguards in place regarding the administration of controlled medication. Post 16 students are able to administer their own medication and there are effective procedures regarding risk assessing and monitoring in place.

The school has excellent arrangements to secure specialist medical services as it has a therapy team including speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, a clinical psychologist, an art psychotherapist and two assistant psychologists. Mental health needs are met by a psychiatrist and there are effective links with the local Community and Adolescent Mental Health Services. All work together with other members of the school to ensure that the health needs of students are well supported.

Students are provided with a choice of healthy and varied food. There are two hot options provided at lunch and tea and there is also a small salad bar. Snacks are provided in the boarding houses and there are good opportunities for the students to learn to shop, prepare and cook for themselves. Each house has one night a week where the students, assisted by staff, take it in turns to cook a meal for everyone else in the house. Mealtimes are sociable occasions when staff and students eat together.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The students' welfare is given top priority and there are excellent safeguarding practices which ensure that students are extremely well protected at the school. All staff receive annual training in child protection and excellent records are maintained of incidents which give cause for concern. Prompt and effective action is taken in liaising with other agencies involved in child protection.

The school undertakes an annual student survey regarding bullying at the school and a detailed analysis of the findings takes place. There has been a focus on cyber bullying with students discussing and agreeing at school council an agreement

regarding the sensible use of mobile phone and e-mails. Students are encouraged to talk to staff about concerns and are confident that they will be quickly and effectively dealt with. There are child friendly forms available if students wish to write down their concerns and a number of staff they feel that they can approach. Any formal complaints are recorded and promptly addressed.

A particular strength of this school is the effective way it supports and manages the behaviour of students. Students are given clear expectations regarding behaviour and achievements are publicly recognised. The school has a member of staff who is responsible for overseeing behaviour support across the school and this works well. This is excellent working together of the care, education and therapy teams to ensure that incidents are followed through and effective strategies developed. Every student has a risk profile in place as well as a more detailed behaviour risk assessment which is regularly reviewed. All staff receive training in managing behaviour which includes the use of physical intervention as a last resort. Incidents are well recorded and a central log is maintained of those requiring a physical intervention. The number of these incidents has halved over recent years and is constantly reducing. Any sanctions imposed are recorded and monitored.

The school takes health and safety issues seriously. The site is secure and safe due to the regular health and safety checks that are routinely carried out. An external company carried out a recent health and safety risk rating on the school and it was awarded 99%. Regular fire drills take place as well as checks of the system. Regular gas and electrical safety checks also take place. Robust risk assessments are carried out and regularly reviewed.

Students are safeguarded by stringent recruitment practices which ensure all staff are thoroughly vetted and checked prior to starting work at the school.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The education, care and therapy teams work together very effectively to encourage the students' development and achievement in all areas of their lives. The communication across teams is strong with regular meetings held such as the 'therapy surgeries' for the care staff to discuss students' progress and keywork sessions with the therapy team. The students' individual education plans are drawn up in collaboration with all key staff to ensure they are fully implemented in both education and care.

The school has two houses specifically for post-16 students. They have a 24-curriculum with significant input from the care setting covering a range of social and independent living skills. There is excellent support for students during the transition to post -16 with provision for work experience and college attendance.

The students have opportunities to take part in an extensive range of activities both on and off the school site. There is a programme of outings and activities for the

evenings and weekends that includes trips to wildlife parks, castles, swimming, bowling and to the cinema. Students have also recently taken part in an adventure weekend in the Brecon Beacons. A number of students are members of clubs within the local community and regular attendance is facilitated. There is an excellent system of risk assessment in place for activities to ensure that they are safely managed.

Students receive outstanding levels of support from a wide range of individuals at the school. All boarders have a keyworker who meets with them on a weekly basis. There is access to a wide range of therapists onsite whom the students know well and a number of 'listeners' within the staff team who have received training for this role. In addition, there are two independent visitors who come to the school on a regular basis. All students spoken to said that they feel very well supported at the school and feel that there are people that they can talk to.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Students' views are actively sought and they are encouraged to make decisions about their lives. They are able to influence the way the school is run and changes are made as a result. The school council meets on a regular basis and there are house meetings, circle times, key work sessions and questionnaires carried out. All students are encouraged to give their views and they feel that the school listens to them.

The school has excellent processes for handling admissions and the transition to adult life. Home visits are made as well as visits to the school and comprehensive information regarding prospective students is obtained before admission. Transition planning starts in Year 9 and there are effective links with local colleges and organisations to provide the best outcomes for students leaving the school.

The written placement plans outlining students support needs and how they will be met are of high quality. They are written with the students and are maintained up to date. The work undertaken at the weekly keywork sessions is excellent, targets are set and this work is supported by the therapy team as well as by the assistant team managers in the houses.

The staff maintain regular contact with parents and work to build positive relationships. A comprehensive file is sent home with students detailing progress in education and care settings and it is usual that weekly telephone contact takes place. Students are encouraged to contact their families by telephone and/or e-mail.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The boarding accommodation at the school is of a high standard and is well suited to the needs of the students. All the students have single bedrooms which are well personalised. Since the last inspection one of the houses in the main house has had the kitchen/lounge completely refurbished which is of excellent quality. There are further plans at half term to refit the shower room in one of the houses as well as a bedroom which will act as the model for a wider refurbishment of bedrooms in the future.

There is a comprehensive programme of renewal and refurbishment to ensure that the high standard of accommodation is maintained and improved.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school has a comprehensive prospectus which provides clear information about the school's care principles and practice for boarders. New students are given a guide to the school which was created with the help of the school council.

There are excellent staffing levels in the houses at all times during the day and at night. Each of the seven houses has a team manager, an assistant team manager as well as a number of learning support workers. One of the team managers acts as a coordinator which ensures that one member of staff has an effective overview of the shift. The school does not use agency staff and has a diverse and stable staff team. Weekly team meetings take place in the houses and staff receive regular formal supervision from management. The staff feel well supported in their role but there is no evidence that new staff are supervised as regularly as indicated in the relevant national minimum standard.

Staff are well trained and undertake a two week induction before commencing their duties. Excellent training opportunities are provided with annual refresher courses as well as one off training sessions and national vocational qualifications.

The school's senior management team are exceptionally experienced and provide staff with a strong degree of support and leadership. There is excellent monitoring of records and identification of patterns or issues requiring action. External monitoring is undertaken by two independent visitors who visit on a regular basis and who write a detailed report with recommendations for improvement.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Each student receives highly individualised care which is tailored to meet their needs. Minority groups are catered for, for example there is a girl's group and activities which are designed to appeal specifically to them. The school prompts students to think of others by taking part in

fund raising activities. Cultural and religious events such as the VE day celebrations and Rosh Hashanah are included in the students' meetings.

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 there is evidence that new staff receive one to one supervision at least fortnightly during the first two terms of their employment (breach of national minimum standard 30.2)