

Bridge School, Longmoor Campus

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Joanne Vyas
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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

This school was formed following the amalgamation of two maintained primary special schools in September 2006. The site provides education for boys and girls aged between two and 11 years of age who have severe or profound learning disabilities; some children also fall within the autistic spectrum. The children who attend the residential unit have all been identified as having severe learning difficulties with a wide range of other needs, including communication difficulties. Most children have had unsuccessful placements at other special schools.

The school is purpose built and includes teaching areas, indoor and outdoor recreational facilities and a residential unit. The residential provision is available between Monday and Friday for up to six children on a term-time basis. Currently, there are four children allocated beds.

The school is a Birmingham City Local Authority school. It is close to local amenities and children also access the wide range of leisure and other facilities in the city.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

The inspector visited this school to complete an announced full inspection during which all the key standards were inspected.

The overall judgement for this school is good with many outstanding features. However, it does not comply with important aspects of the national minimum standards through its documentation. Despite this pupils at the school are well cared for and safe. The family atmosphere which pervades all aspects of the pupil's experience at the school provides a strong component of the quality of care in practice. Pupils make clear progress. The staff team are qualified, caring, competent and well supported by each other and the senior leadership team. They are passionate and committed to the work that they do. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding throughout the standards inspected. There are excellent working relationships on behalf of the pupil across the school to ensure that the pupil's needs are fully addressed. Staff are committed to work in partnership with pupils and their families, social workers and external agencies to promote a child-centred approach to care and education.

This school has a number of shortfalls, none of which currently have an impact on outcomes for children. However, the impact may become more apparent when the school appoint new staff or they have new children in residence. Shortfalls include the records for risk assessment, both fire and children's activities; physical

intervention; care planning and monitoring. Additionally, the school do not have an induction programme for newly appointed staff for the residential unit and training does not cover more specialist areas such as autism. Furthermore, electrical installations are not checked at least every three years as stated in the national minimum standards.

Improvements since the last inspection

The school have made some progress towards meeting the recommendations made at the previous inspection. They now have a bound and numbered book for the recording of sanctions and staff are fully supported in their role. However, staff training and development opportunities still require improvement.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Staff are focussed and committed to ensuring a good quality provision for health care for all pupils. They have a close working relationship with other healthcare professionals including physiotherapists, speech and language therapists and mental health services. Each pupil has a health plan that addresses the needs of pupils including those arising from cultural needs. Plans where medical intervention is required such as epilepsy, are reviewed by a qualified nurse according to need. The nurse also provides training for staff.

The safe handling of medication is good in this school. Staff receive training in the safe handling of medication. Medication is accurately recorded, received and disposed of appropriately. The medication cupboards are secure. All accidents are recorded and first aid is given as appropriate. There is always a member of staff on duty who is trained to give first aid.

Mealtimes are sociable occasions, where a variety of healthy food is served in ample quantities. Pupils are given the opportunity to discuss and change menus. Special dietary needs or preferences are catered for but staff also encourage the children to try different foods. Pupils are sensitively supported to eat their meals and are provided with the appropriate equipment to enable them to eat as independently as possible. Pupils make choices using appropriate communication systems throughout their meals.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Pupils feel safe boarding at this school. The safety and rights of both staff and pupils are protected. Any safeguarding issues are quickly referred to the appropriate external agencies. Most staff have received basic child protection training which forms part of the home's internal core staff training programme. Staff are competent in their knowledge of the school's child protection procedures. The school has a good

bullying policy which staff are knowledgeable in. However, staff say that bullying does not occur within the residential unit. The school has a written procedure for action if pupils go missing. There are no incidents of pupils missing from the school. All visitors sign into the school and must show identification.

The privacy of pupils is respected by staff. The living arrangements provide adequate space where they can relax and easily find privacy away from others if they wish. Sensitive information is held securely in the office. Pupils are not discussed openly.

Pupils are provided with opportunities to make complaints. Staff know the children well and provide them with appropriate means of communication when they are unhappy to establish what the problem is. There are regular school and residential unit council meetings where pupils can make complaints. Parents feel that they can talk to the staff about any concerns they have and that these are dealt with effectively. It is clear from observation and discussion that the school's leadership team is responsive to issues raised by the pupils and their parents and ensures measures put in place to resolve issues are effectively communicated.

Staff view the pupils positively and there is a family atmosphere in the residential unit. Staff are given training during their induction on physical intervention and this is updated as necessary. Physical intervention is used as a last resort. There is a minimal amount of physical intervention carried out in this school. However, not all physical intervention is recorded in the central record. This currently has no impact on children but may in the future as it is difficult to monitor the use of physical intervention and its effectiveness. Staff do not use sanctions but do use 'time out' as a measure of control. This is not currently recorded so again makes monitoring of the effectiveness of this measure of control difficult. Boundaries between staff and pupils are clear and relationships are excellent.

There are satisfactory vetting procedures in place for newly appointed staff. Safety checks are completed and staff only commence employment when they have a satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau disclosure and two satisfactory references.

The school has comprehensive risk assessments for most aspects of safety of the premises and grounds. These, however, do not include fire. Although staff are given fire safety training and appropriate fire drills and checks are carried out on a regular basis, some deficiencies may not be highlighted. The school discussed this with the local authority during the inspection and will have a fire risk assessment completed as a matter of urgency. Written risk assessments for pupils are not comprehensive in content, not regularly reviewed and not known by the staff. However, staff do prioritise the safety of children and ensure they are safe in practice. The school does not check electrical installations every three years as set out in the national minimum standards for residential special schools. All other health and safety procedures are robust.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Education is an intrinsic part of life in residence. Pupils make clear progress which is continued into their home life and fully supports their learning. Parents, care and teaching staff work in partnership to enable the child to fulfil their potential. Parents are fully supported to locate appropriate residential secondary education for their child. They appreciate and value this support and guidance to enable them to successfully transition their child into the next phase of their education. There is a child-centred approach to care and education.

Individual support is detailed in each pupil's file and observations and discussions with staff showed that staff ensure each pupil's individual needs are fully addressed. This includes identifying any religious and cultural needs a child may have and ensuring these are observed. Parents particularly like being invited into the residential unit each week to have family time which is uninterrupted. They use the school's facilities such as the soft play room or sensory suite and enjoy protected time with their son or daughter. Parents said of the staff in residence, 'Staff are so devoted' and 'They treat every child like their own.'

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

A parent said, 'Staff are lovely and know my son really well.' Care plans, including behaviour management plans, are not comprehensive and are not regularly reviewed. Targets are also set termly but evidence in pupil's files did not show termly reviews. This currently does not impact on the care of children as staff have known the children for a long time and so have a good knowledge and understanding of them. However, newly appointed staff may struggle to have the same knowledge and understanding of the children.

Staff are committed to working in partnership with pupils and their families, social workers and external agencies to promote individual care programmes, tailored to the pupil's needs. A parent said, 'They are here for me as well as my son. They support the whole family.' Staff communicate at least weekly with parents and ensure they play a full and active role in decisions about their child. They are fully consulted prior to a child moving into the residential unit and fully supported when it is time for their child to move on. A parent said, 'I would give this school 100 out of 10.'

Staff use a variety of communication aids such as signing and pictures to enable each child to make choices and express their feelings. Pupils also take part in regular residential unit council meetings which focus on addressing one question about the unit and enabling the children to answer through artwork, symbols and signing. This work with children clearly demonstrates that staff value and listen to the views and wishes of children.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Pupils live in a homely environment, with good quality furnishings. There is a satisfactory amount of communal space. The pupils have good facilities which include a sensory suite, a soft play room, swimming pool, lots of outdoor play space and a lovely, well thought out sensory garden. Their bedrooms are highly personalised and they can personalise communal areas if they wish and examples of cultural choices are evident. The school is clean and tidy and well maintained. Pupils appear to value their school and their surroundings.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The Statement of Purpose is a comprehensive document and is reviewed on an annual basis. The commitment to promoting equality and diversity is explicit in this information. There are good staffing levels in the residential unit and it is staffed appropriately at night.

Staff have access to an adequate training programme. Currently, there is not a planned induction training programme for newly appointed staff and training only covers mandatory subjects rather than more specialist training such as methods of communication and autism. However, the staff team are qualified, caring, competent and well supported by each other and the senior leadership team. They are passionate and committed to the work that they do.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Evidence supports a consistent commitment to improving equality and diversity in practice. Pupils and their families receive an individual service in the school which is designed to meet their personal needs. All staff have a strong knowledge of the pupils they are working with ensuring their needs are consistently met. Staff work in partnership with parents and carers to ensure a high quality service where the ethos is centred around meeting the individual needs and aspirations of pupils.

The senior leadership team does not currently evidence well the monitoring of the residential unit. However, it is clear that they are well informed about the practice within the unit. Governors and independent listeners visit the residential unit regularly and report back to the governing body and senior leadership team. Areas requiring improvement such as record keeping, induction and training have not been previously highlighted within current monitoring systems. Although this currently has no impact on children, as new children or staff arrive in residence, the impact may become more evident.

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 there is a record of any use of physical intervention on a child by an adult kept in a separate bound and numbered book (NMS 10.14)
- ensure risk assessments are carried out, recorded in writing and regularly reviewed. Such risk assessments are carried out with regard to the school's premises and grounds (including the risk of fire) and all risks arising about children in the school as listed in the standard (NMS 26.3)
- ensure electrical installations are checked at least every three years (NMS 26.2)
- ensure there is a written placement plan that identifies the needs of that child as stated in the standard in order to promote their welfare on a day to day basis. The placement plan is regularly reviewed and amended to reflect significant changes in the child's needs or progress in his development (NMS 17.2)
- ensure there is an induction training programme in place for all new appointed care and ancillary staff and that all staff receive training and development opportunities that equip them with the skills required to meet the needs of the children and the purpose of the school (NMS 29)
- ensure there are effective monitoring systems in place in order to identify any patterns or issues requiring action and take any required follow up or consequential action. (NMS 32.2)