

Windlestone School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Steve Pearson
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Setting address	Windlestone School, Chilton, FERRYHILL, County Durham, DL17 0HP
Telephone number	01388 720337
Email	windlestone.school@durhamlearning.net
Registered person	Durham County Council (Children's Services)
Head/ Principal	Tim Bennett
Nominated person	David Ford
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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 is a residential special school for 72 children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school opened in 2006 and provides 20 residential places on weekdays for boys and girls, aged from 11 to 16 years old. Accommodation comprises of a purpose-built residential block with two ten-bedded mixed gender units. Most bedrooms are single-bedded and all bedrooms have en-suite showers and toilets. Residential pupils have access to the extended day facilities provided at the school until 7.30pm each weekday.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an announced, full inspection and so all the key national minimum standards (NMS) were assessed. The inspection also assessed whether the school had met the seven recommendations made at the previous inspection on 9 November 2009.

At the time of the inspection there were 13 young people staying in the residential units. The inspector spoke with six of the young people and 17 of them also completed written surveys about the quality of the care. Ten members of staff also sent in survey forms.

The overall quality of residential care in this school is of a high quality.

Outcomes associated with promotion of health and safety are good. The staff receive regular training in first aid and specialist subjects and a school nurse visits every week. The food menu is varied and nutritional. Effective arrangements are in place regarding child protection and the staff are fully aware of how to respond to allegations, suspicions or evidence of abuse. However, risk assessments for bullying and other hazards are not fully clear or specific, and the use of jargon in the recording of physical interventions means there is weakened accountability for the use of such measures.

Very effective arrangements are in place to protect young people from the risks of fire, and all gas and electrical equipment is serviced and maintained regularly.

Young people are fully supported to enjoy and achieve in life and outcomes here are excellent.

Young people are also able to fully contribute to the running of the residential units and to have a say in the content of their care plans. However residential placement

plans are not fully clear about the needs of young people and how such needs will be met.

The residential facilities are well-designed, homely and comfortable. Young people appreciate the en suite facilities.

The residential care is managed effectively. The staffing arrangements ensure young people receive highly consistent care. Monitoring of care quality is also comprehensive and fully evaluative and so shortfalls are identified and addressed in a timely manner.

Improvements since the last inspection

The recording of administration of controlled drugs is now more robust because details are recorded in a bound, pre-formatted book. However, the administration is not witnessed by a second, trained person. This good practice is suggested by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society and, consequently, a recommendation made at the previous inspection has been repeated.

There is less accountability for the use of physical interventions because the nature of any physical intervention is only described by the use of jargon. This is not meaningful to external people who may need to examine the records at a later date. Consequently, a recommendation made at the previous inspection has been repeated.

Outcomes associated with safety have improved. The date of fire risk assessment documents show this is done every year. Records now show that fire drills are undertaken regularly and the names of young people and staff partaking in each drill are also recorded.

Progress has been made with the ineffective heating system. Although some parts of the building remain too hot or cold, every effort is being made to reach a long-term solution and young people say that generally speaking it is more effective. Ofsted will continue to monitor this issue.

Young people are now better informed about the school because the information in the Statement of Purpose is presented in a children's guide which is easy to understand.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The school is effective at promoting young people's health. All the staff are trained in the administration of first aid and some of the staff are fully qualified in this. However, due to an administrative error, written consent from those with parental responsibility is not in place to permit the staff to administer first aid to young people, if necessary. However parental consent was in place for emergency

treatment by medical professionals.

Any administration of medication to a young person is recorded in a bound book. These records provide for high levels of accountability for who has received medication. However, contrary to the recommendations of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, a second trained person does not witness the administration of any controlled drug to a young person. This weakens the accountability of administration of these significant medications. Consequently a recommendation made at the previous inspection has been repeated.

Young people have access to a wide range of support from external professionals. For example, a school nurse visits once a week, young people receive support from the county's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, and an educational psychologist also visits regularly. The school has achieved 'healthy school' status and the staff provide discrete emotional literacy lessons. One young person summarised the promotion of health by saying 'I'm happy about my health, I get advice from staff and I can see the school nurse if I want to'.

Young people enjoy the food. One young person summarised this by saying 'the food is nice, especially in the residential units as the food is very fresh. We get a choice including something different if we don't eat meat. There's always fruit and yogurts available if we want a snack'. The school's menus have been approved by a nutritionist and mealtimes are social and orderly occasions. The school nurse provides general training about issues, such as, sunburn awareness and the effects of smoking. She has also provides specialist training associated with issues, such as food allergies.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The staff are effective at promoting the safety of young people.

Young people receive the privacy they need when they need it. The staff are aware they cannot guarantee confidentiality to a child if welfare concerns arise. Young people can make and receive telephone calls in private without needing to seek permission from a member of staff. Parental consent is in place for the use of internal closed circuit television plus bedroom door alarms which are used to promote young people's welfare.

The school has a clear complaints policy. The school also publishes the policy on its website, but this version is out of date and states that complaints can be made to a regulatory organisation which no longer exists. The staff deal with most issues appropriately at an informal level and this is done quickly and effectively. The complaint procedures are displayed on a notice board in each residential unit and in each young person's guide to the school. However, most young people are unaware of the formal complaints system.

All young people who completed a survey felt they could talk to someone if they were sad, and they all said they felt safe at the school. All the staff, including ancillary staff, receive regular training in child protection and job descriptions state that all staff have a duty to report concerns to their line manager.

Of the 17 young people who completed a survey, four said they were bullied. In discussion, the young people said there was no bullying in the residential units and that the staff in the school did what they could to prevent or stop bullying. A counter-bullying liaison person visits young people from time to time and the school promotes counter-bullying. For example, sometimes the issue of bullying is discussed with all young people at morning assemblies and the staff adopt a zero tolerance policy. However, risk assessments for bullying are not fully robust. For example, for some young people who said they were bullied in school time, their risk assessment did not always reflect this. And the risk assessment format only provides for assessment of the risk of bullying but not the risk of being bullied. Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, young people confirmed there was no bullying in the residential units.

It is very rare that any young person goes missing from the residential units. However, a protocol including contacting the police is in place should this happen.

The staff are effective at promoting positive behaviour. Sanctions are rare and young people said that when they are used, they are fair. Occasionally the staff have to restrain young people if their behaviour is causing concerns for welfare or if serious damage to property occurs. Such occasions in the residential unit are rare. The staff receive training once a year in behaviour management including the safe use of restraint. One young person said 'I've never been restrained here but I was restrained a lot in the place before. The staff help me to manage my anger and to walk away if I get annoyed'.

The use of any sanction or restraint is recorded in a bound book and this covers all the necessary details. However, the nature of the restraint used is only described by the use of jargon. For example, on one occasion the restraint used was recorded as a "standing figure 4" and on another "a sitting wrap" was used. This reliance on jargon weakens accountability as other people who read the records may not necessarily understand what the terms mean. Consequently, a recommendation made at the previous inspection has been repeated.

The premises are maintained in a safe condition. Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires. This system of checks is clear and robust and it is managed very well. Any shortfalls in operation of systems are recorded as are the dates of repairs. Fire risk assessments are conducted every year and the headteacher monitors and countersigns risk assessments every term.

Risk assessments for individual young people are not so effective. The range of assessed hazards is comprehensive, incorporating 13 hazards split between the main school and the residential units. However, the actions to be undertaken to reduce the

risk of the hazards are identical for each issue. Because the actions are not individually tailored to each hazard, it is difficult to be assured that each one will be addressed in a manner that will be fully effective.

Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that staff recruited to work with young people are suitable and safe. The school requires every member of staff to undergo a fresh Criminal Records Bureau check every three years, and young people are involved in the selection of staff. The school also ensures appropriate checks have taken place for taxi drivers and escorts in contact with young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The school is excellent at enabling young people to enjoy and achieve in life.

The residential units make a full contribution to each young person's education. Each unit has its own computer with internet access and each young person can securely save their own work. The staff help young people with reading and art skills, young people can use the school's fitness suite and the staff help young people to learn useful skills such as budgeting, shopping and laundry skills. There is also a wide range of books and board games and a wide variety of leisure and sporting activities.

Each young person receives a high level of individual support. The school operates a personal and teacher mentor system. This ensures each young person has a named member of staff to talk to and to represent them regarding social and educational matters. However, young people can also seek support from any member of staff at any time. One young person summed up the quality of support they receive in the residential unit by saying 'it's lovely in the residential unit, we can talk to our mates there. If something goes wrong, the staff will sort it'. And another young person said 'one of the best things about being in the residential unit is that it's a social time and we can chill and be ourselves'. All young people who completed a survey said they felt they were listened to. Twelve young people said the care was 'great', three said care was 'good' and two said the care was 'ok'. Several members of staff commented on the school's policy of boosting self-esteem by giving accolades, such as 'star of the week' and 'school mentions'.

Young people are also provided with a high level of consistency in the residential units. The staff tend to work the same shifts each week. Additionally, one individual, who is a senior member of staff, sleeps in every night which also promotes good continuity for young people and enables effective handover of information the following morning. Additionally, young people said they liked having the same bedroom each time they stayed in the residential unit. They were also pleased that no other young person stayed in their bedroom while they were at home. This also gave them a greater sense of ownership and continuity.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people are fully supported to contribute their ideas and opinions about the running of the residential units and about their own care plans.

The head of care and staff hold regular house meetings. An agenda is displayed in advance and young people can add any issues to this in advance. The content and outcomes of the meetings are also recorded for future reference. One young person said 'the staff listen to what we say' and they went on to give a good example of when the staff had listened to the young person's personal concern and had made an appropriate response to the benefit of the young person.

Effective admission procedures are also in place. Young people come to look around the school before they are admitted. Parents are also welcomed to have a look round and meet the staff. Previous important information is sent to the school to help continuity. The school also invests a lot of time and resources into promotion of effective leaving arrangements. Older students receive support from a transitions mentor who coordinates leaving school arrangements and who offers support and advice.

Regular meetings are held to review progress being made in school and in the residential units. These meetings result in new residential placement plans which describe the needs of young people and how they should be met. However, the residential placement plans do not fully describe the range of young people's needs or the role of staff in helping to ensure such needs are met. For example, methods of communication, cultural and religious needs, managing behavioural difficulties and instructions for administration of medication are not always described in the plan. Sometimes there is also poor follow-through of outcomes and recommendations of psychiatrists' health assessments into the health sections of the residential placement plans. The overall outcome is that the residential placement plans are not always fully clear about the range of young people's needs and how these are to be met.

Effective arrangements are in place to enable young people to maintain contact with their friends and family. Young people said they could use the phone in the quiet lounge at any reasonable time without having to ask the staff. The staff also maintain weekly contact with parents to discuss progress at home and in the residential unit.

Relationships between the residential care staff and the young people are very good. 15 out of 17 young people who completed a survey gave the staff a top rating of 'great'. The other two young people said they were 'good'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The residential facilities are well-designed, homely and comfortable. The effectiveness of the heating system remains somewhat variable but a lot of effort is being put into making sure it works properly. Overall, young people and staff feel that the heating in the residential units is better than it was although some young people feel the bedrooms are still too cold when they get up on a morning.

Young people can personalise their bedrooms and they have a say in the décor and furnishings in the units. They also appreciate the quality of the residential facilities. For example, one young person said 'I like my bedroom, it feels like home. I also like having my own en suite shower and toilet so I don't have to share it with anyone else'.

Discrete closed circuit television cameras are installed in corridors of the residential units and each bedroom door has a door monitoring alarm. These are for security and for maintaining safety during the night especially if young people are of both genders.

There is a wide range of involvement between young people and the local community. For example, young people are involved in helping older people with their shopping at a local supermarket and to use a dial-a-ride service. Young people also act as helpers at older people's functions, they deliver mail shots on behalf of an older persons charity, they undertake paired reading at a local junior school, and they host visits to the school farm from other schools.

All young people who completed a survey said the care staff help them to be independent. They learn how to handle pocket money, they learn laundry skills, self care and personal hygiene skills, and the school has good working relationships with Connexions. A transitions mentor provides advice and support to young people who are approaching the end of their school life in years 10 and 11.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The organisational arrangements of the residential care is strong and effective.

The school has an up-to-date Statement of Purpose, and a children's guide and a brochure for parents is also produced. These documents contain all necessary information although the qualifications of the staff are not mentioned in the Statement of Purpose. It is helpful that these and other documents, such as policies and inspection reports, are readily available on the school's website. However, these versions are historical and contain out-of-date information.

Young people are looked after by staff who provide consistency of relationships and

care. The same staff work the same shifts each week and there is minimal staff turnover. The young people appreciate this. For example, one young person said 'we know the staff well and the same staff work the same shifts each week so we always know who's on each night, which is good'. The staff group in day-to-day contact with young people includes staff of both genders.

All staff receive regular supervision at appropriate frequencies and there are regular meetings for all the whole team of school staff, as well as meetings specifically for the residential staff. Suitable arrangements are also in place regarding professional supervision and support for the headteacher. There are good levels of staffing and suitable arrangements are in place to cover absences and sickness. All staff have a handbook with school procedures in it.

Over 80% of the staff are qualified to level three in the National Vocational Qualification in Care and the head of care is professionally qualified in social work. There is also a wide range of training provided to the staff. One member of staff said they liked the constant after-school meetings and refresher courses at teacher training days. The staff maintain weekly contact with parents which allows effective communication about progress at school and at home.

Monitoring and self-assessment of the quality of care is effective. The headteacher monitors and signs the relevant records every half term or every term, as appropriate. A person from outside the school also makes unannounced visits to the school at least once every half term and they quickly report back their findings. The monitoring is comprehensive although sometimes it is difficult to identify recommendations made in the report.

The staff confirmed they are enabled to read these half-termly monitoring reports and also the inspection reports produced by Ofsted.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. There is a strong ethos of considering each young person as an individual and a focus on enabling young people to develop their potential. The organisation of staffing in the residential units creates a strong sense of continuity and structure for the young people and this helps them to feel secure. Young people are enabled to develop a broad insight and understanding of others in the community. For example, they gain esteem and consideration through being given opportunities to help those who are less able such as older people, children of primary school age and by fund raising for local causes. Young people are also given a depth of understanding through theme nights when the staff in the residential units create an awareness of various cultures from around the world.

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...

- obtain written permission, from those with parental responsibility, to enable their child to receive first aid as necessary from the staff at the school (NMS 14.10)
- follow the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's recommendations about the recording of controlled drugs. In particular this relates to the recommendation that a second appropriately trained member of staff witnesses the administration of any controlled drug (NMS 14.20)
- ensure that each young person's risk assessment for bullying separately addresses the risk of being bullied and the risk of bullying others (NMS 6.3)
- ensure that records of physical intervention include the nature of the physical intervention used that do not include jargon (NMS 10)
- ensure that risk assessments are carried out and recorded in writing with regard to known and likely activities. In particular, this relates to the recording of clear reasonable measures to reduce any significant hazards which have been identified in individual young people's risk assessments (NMS 26.3)
- ensure that each young person's residential placement plan considers the issues recommended in the relevant standard. (NMS 17.5)