

# Ripplevale School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

---

<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC023668
<b>Inspection date</b>	01/12/2010
<b>Inspector</b>	Liz Daniels
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Key

---

<b>Setting address</b>	Ripplevale School, Chapel Lane, Ripple, Deal, Kent, CT14 8JG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01304 373866
<b>Email</b>	info@ripplevaleschool.co.uk
<b>Registered person</b>	Ted Schofield
<b>Head/ Principal</b>	Ted Schofield
<b>Nominated person</b>	
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	18/11/2009

---

© Crown copyright 2010

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: [www.tso.co.uk/bookshop](http://www.tso.co.uk/bookshop)

## 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

Ripplevale School is a special needs day and residential school for boys. It caters for a maximum of 60 boys from seven to 16 years of age and is situated in the village of Ripple, near to the coastal towns of Deal and Dover. Although placed in a rural setting, the school's transport provision enables pupils to access all the necessary community resources and leisure facilities. The school is set within its own grounds and has extensive hard court facilities for basketball and other games as well as a large playing field for football, rugby and cricket.

There were nine young people boarding at the time of the inspection and the majority were met with and contributed their views to this inspection.

The residential provision is managed by the principal, deputy head of care and a team of care staff. There are currently nine boarders accommodated within the residential house; all were present for all or part of the inspection and contributed their views. They have well furnished and equipped bedrooms as well as access to three communal rooms for indoor leisure activities. The school aims to 'enlarge a pupil's knowledge, experience and imaginative understanding and thus his awareness of moral values and capacity for enjoyment'.

### Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

At this announced inspection all the key national minimum standards were assessed. This is an outstanding school in all areas.

Staff promote good health and ensure young people's health needs are well met. They are well trained and excellent processes are in place to keep young people safe. The school has a homely boarding environment where learning is promoted; enabling young people to develop and achieve to their full potential is a fundamental ethos across the school. A range of activities and time with staff provide opportunities for young people to learn skills which will help prepare them for their next placement and to work towards independence.

### Improvements since the last inspection

Six recommendations were made at the last inspection, all of which have been met. As a result, the recording and monitoring of medication given to young people is now much clearer and the records of behaviour management include all the required information. In addition, re-organisation of the care office means that information about young people is protected and the restriction of windows above the ground

floor reduces the risk of young people falling. Similarly, improved fire drill records enables the school to monitor that all care staff and young people are involved in practise evacuations and the revision of the internal fire door makes it much safer for the staff and young people.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Staff at Ripplevale promote the health of young people who board. They ensure that health needs are identified as part of the admission process and that each is registered with a local General Practitioner who regularly visits the school. They also work with families to ensure that young people receive regular dental and optical care as well as access other health professionals when required. Care plans guide staff in how to enable young people to maintain good health. There are very good arrangements made to ensure First Aid is administered safely and medication is very well managed by staff who are appropriately trained. Included in the training is the administration of non prescription medications; however, there are no written protocols available for staff to reference.

The standard of catering at the school is high and the small knowledgeable catering team are enthusiastic about providing a choice of healthy varied meals for young people. Menus are publicised and consideration is given to any dietary needs. Staff regularly review feedback from young people about the food provided and incorporate their views into the menu. Young people are very positive about the food and confirm that there is plenty; they are confident that they are listened to with regards to their preferences.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

Staff respect young people's privacy and demonstrate a clear understanding about maintaining confidentiality. A telephone box in the house enables young people to make calls in private, or they can use their own mobiles. Each bedroom is lockable and young people then have their own dedicated fob to access their room. Comprehensive policies ensure staff knock before entering bedrooms and that there is guidance on when it may be necessary to search young people's possessions.

Staff recognise that all young people have the right to complain and that their concerns must be taken seriously, investigated and acted upon. The complaints process is well publicised and young people confirm they can talk with staff and raise concerns. Records demonstrate that staff capture anxieties young people experience and follow them up to reach a satisfactory outcome. Similarly, records confirm that excellent communication with families also ensures any concerns they raise are discussed and investigated. All complaints are included in the data collated for discussion at the fortnightly meeting between the principal and the directors.

There are robust systems at the school, aimed at preventing abuse. A comprehensive training programme ensures all staff in the school and boarding provision are trained in safeguarding; child protection is also included in each new staff member's induction. Staff confirm that they recognise and know how to respond to safeguarding concerns. The school's education and family liaison officer is a valuable asset as the named person for safeguarding, through whom any allegations of abuse or concerns are coordinated. She is confident to discuss any queries with the local safeguarding team and has the local safeguarding children procedures available for reference.

There is a policy and guidance for staff to follow with regards to bullying. It is not tolerated and young people are confident that staff will intervene. Staff are aware of the group dynamics, as well as which triggers can lead to behaviour which may cause distress or conflict between young people. Equally, bullying is discussed openly at young people's meetings and this, with close staff supervision and support, is resulting in a low incidence. Similarly, those at risk of becoming absent without permission are identified and excellent strategies are resulting in very few instances. In the event, absence is well managed to protect young people

Behaviour is very well managed. A strong ethos of reward runs through the school but young people are clear of the consequences of disruptive or inappropriate behaviour. Staff use the required bound books to record any physical interventions and sanctions, although these are minimal. They are trained in behaviour management and believe firmly that most situations can be resolved through de-escalation techniques. As a result, sanctions are fair and physical intervention is only used when there is a risk of harm to individuals.

Excellent steps are taken to ensure young people, staff and visitors are kept safe. Risk assessments are updated as hazards are identified and all are reviewed at least annually. Appropriate contracts are in place and very good measures are undertaken for fire safety. All staff are trained in fire awareness and twice termly fire drills are held over each 24-hour period. Monitoring of those involved ensures that all staff involved with boarding are included in at least one fire drill evacuation each year.

Visitors to Ripplevale are very well vetted and contractors involved with the setting are carefully monitored. The controlled entry system for the majority of the external doors, greatly reduces the risk of unauthorised public access to young people. Very thorough recruitment processes are also undertaken. All the necessary information is received prior to employment and discussions with staff confirm that the required checks are made. All staff then undertake induction training.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

For those young people who board, the care staff support them with their daily routines enabling them to attend education. Staff assist in the classroom as well as within boarding, enabling close liaison throughout the school staff team. Young

people's targets are shared between school and the residence, ensuring that they benefit from a cohesive and consistent approach. Staff support enables them to absorb learning appropriate to their individual need as well as develop their life and social skills.

A real strength of the school is that each young person is clearly known as and treated as an individual. Many present with difficulties in socialising and being part of a group; caring and qualified staff are skilled to engage with them at the level of their individual needs, to support them throughout the 24-hour period. There is separation between the school day and boarding time but the individual support young people receive remains constant. An independent person regularly visits the school; his details are well publicised within the residences and young people know about him as someone they can contact and talk to outside the school. Staff offer a wide range of activities which include trips out as well as time in the house. But they also benefit from free time when they can choose sedentary activities or be in their rooms.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

The voice of young people is evident at Ripplevale. There are many forums which provide opportunities for them to express their views. They strongly believe they are listened to and that their views are important. Changes introduced as a result of young people's ideas can be seen across the setting.

Care staff develop an individual care plan for each young person under the Every Child Matters outcome headings. Targets are set which are agreed at young people's reviews and these then provide the focus of care for key staff. Reviews clearly confirm that the good work being done with young people is enabling them to progress well.

Young people stay at the school during the week and return home for weekends. When they board, they are strongly supported to maintain contact with their families by using their own mobile phones or the payphone within the house. The school's education and family liaison officer works closely with families and keeps in regular contact with them; the role is a real strength of the school as by being aware of the needs of each family, staff feel better able to care for young people.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

Young people who board can wear their own clothes outside school time. As they each have a washbasin in their bedroom, they can keep their own toiletries there. Similarly, lockable bedrooms as well as lockable cupboards enable them to keep their valuables safe. Alternatively, when extra money is brought to school, staff help young people look after it while maintaining records to confirm its safe keeping. Staff

encourage and assist young people to manage their own money.

The daily life of the school provides many opportunities for young people to develop the knowledge and skills they are likely to need for their future living. Each young person's independence assessment enables all staff to focus on the areas where they particularly need support. Excellent liaison between the school and responsible authority ensures that young people have a planned and structured transition to their next placement.

The standard of accommodation for young people is very good and well maintained. Good efforts have been made to ensure that the boarding house is pleasant and homely, with sufficient space and facilities to meet young people's needs. Excellent facilities and good quality furnishings enable them to enjoy a comfortable environment. Several communal areas provide sufficient space for young people to enjoy a range of activities and pastimes. The bedrooms are suitably furnished and young people are able to personalise them as they wish.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

Clear, well-presented information about the school is provided to parents, staff and young people. This accurately describes what the school sets out to do and includes details of the residential service provided. Young people have their own guide which is available in a format which they can easily understand. The school's website also provides up-to-date information about events and the life of the school.

An experienced and qualified staff team care for young people when they board. Currently the school provides weekly boarding for nine young people. Rotas are planned to promote continuity of staffing each week and good staffing levels allow young people to be well supported and protected. The excellent arrangements for staff training include specific training to meet the individual needs of young people; this helps ensure that young people are provided with safe care by knowledgeable staff. New staff undertake an induction programme which focuses on all the key areas of care provision. All staff receive excellent levels of supervision, which they confirm is meaningful and productive. Staff feel morale within the teams is extremely good with excellent support and guidance being provided.

There is strong organisation and management of the school and clear lines of accountability. The experienced senior staff team provides sound and committed leadership across the school. Rigorous monitoring ensures that all aspects of care provision are regularly reviewed by the principal or a member of the senior management team. The residential provision and the welfare of young people who stay, are seen as an integral part of the school and are reflected in the fortnightly meetings between the directors and senior staff. The directors also undertake monitoring visits each term and produce comprehensive reports which identify strengths as well as guide staff in the areas for development.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. There is a strong focus in the school of treating young people as individuals; their specific needs are always taken into consideration and are never seen as a barrier. The school provides opportunities for young people to learn about differences in culture, beliefs and background; it also promotes the view that differences are to be enjoyed and celebrated.

## **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 the school has secured and follows qualified medical advice in a written protocol on the provision of non-prescription household medicines to young people (NMS 14.18)