

# Elemore Hall School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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<b>Inspector</b>	Steve Pearson
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<b>Head/ Principal</b>	Richard Royle
<b>Nominated person</b>	David Ford
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	10/02/2010

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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**

This is a maintained residential special school for up to 72 boys and girls of secondary school age. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs due to social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties.

The school is a converted country house in its own grounds and has a residential facility for up to 25 young people split between two units. Accommodation is provided for up to four nights a week but is not provided at weekends or during school holidays.

The school also provides an extended school day service for some young people until 6pm or 8pm.

## **Summary**

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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 17 recommendations made at the previous inspection on 10 February 2010. These were about medication records, consent for first aid treatment, records of restraints and sanctions, risk assessments, training, the Statement of Purpose and the monitoring of provision.

Only two terms have elapsed since the previous inspection. In this time the school has met many of the recommendations and the quality of all outcomes has either improved or been maintained.

The school is particularly strong at promoting young people's health and at enabling them to enjoy and achieve in life. All the staff are also adept at promoting equality of opportunities for young people and at promoting awareness and acceptance of the differences between people.

However, a significant number of recommendations have been made at this inspection. There are several issues requiring attention which are associated with the promotion of safety. Nevertheless, the overall quality of provision is sound.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

The arrangements for promotion of good health have improved. The school follows the recommendations of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society by recording the administration of any controlled drug in a bound and page-numbered book. The

school also now obtains written parental permission thereby enabling the staff to administer first aid to young people if necessary.

Incidents of physical intervention are recorded in a bound and page-numbered book. Young people are also enabled to record their comments and signature about the use of physical interventions and sanctions.

Child protection training has not yet been provided to all the ancillary staff and consequently a recommendation made at the previous inspection has been repeated. Additionally, each young person's assessment of risks associated with bullying does not separately consider the risks of bullying and being bullied. This means the issues are not being assessed as well as they could be and consequently another recommendation made at the previous inspection has been repeated. However, the school does conduct a generic risk assessment of the times and places where bullying might occur throughout the school.

A broader risk assessment of hazards which may affect young people across the school has also been carried out.

Organisational outcomes have also improved. The Statement of Purpose now contains more of the recommended information and a suitable version has been provided for young people in the form of a children's guide. The Statement of Purpose also now contains more information which is of interest to parents. The head conducts an annual review of the residential provision and each member of the governing body now has access to their own copy of the independent visitor's half-termly monitoring report.

However, the staff do not yet receive annual appraisals as the head is enabling more staff to benefit from ongoing supervision. In addition, neither the head nor a delegated senior member of staff monitors and signs all the relevant records every half term or every term, and a record is not made of when any recommendations or actions arising from the independent visitor's half-termly monitoring is completed. Consequently three other recommendations made at the previous inspection have been repeated.

## **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Outcomes associated with promotion of health are excellent. The staff provide young people with a lot of support and advice. For example, one young person said 'we keep fit with lots of exercise like gym nights, swimming, mountain biking and we get advice like smoking cessation sessions'. All the care staff are fully qualified to administer first aid and all staff who administer medication are also appropriately trained. The administration of medication is recorded clearly and comprehensively and the school follows the guidance of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. The staff also receive training in other subjects such as sex and relationship education and attachment disorders. Young people have ready access to guidance and treatment

from a school nurse who visits regularly.

Of the 13 young people who completed a survey, 11 said the food was good. All of the staff who prepare or cook food have received training in food hygiene. Young people are provided with a varied diet and a vegetarian choice is offered at every meal. The local authority environmental health department has assessed the food preparation and cooking facilities and it has awarded the school the highest level of quality. The school has recently created a 1000 square metre allotment which helps to provide fresh vegetables for mealtimes.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people receive the privacy they need when they need it. For example, one young person said 'we can have our own time to ourselves when we want it'. Young people can also lock their bedroom door and they have lockable cabinets. When young people have to share a bedroom, they do so with another young person with whom they are friends and who is within 12 months of their own age.

The school has a formal complaints policy, although such complaints are rare. No formal complaints have been made since the previous inspection. The staff deal with most issues informally as they arise. For example, one young person said 'if I had a problem I would just discuss it with the staff or I'd fill in a suggestion form'. Each residential unit has suggestion forms on which young people can make anonymous comments. The outcomes are written on the young people's notice board which helps young people to feel their opinions are valued and important.

All young people said they can talk to someone at the school if they are feeling sad. All of the care staff and most of the ancillary staff have received training in child protection from the designated officer in the local authority's education department. They clearly understand how to respond to any allegations, suspicions or evidence of abuse. However, not all the ancillary staff have received this training and consequently a recommendation made at the previous inspection has been repeated.

Young people said there is some bullying and it is mostly in the school rather than in the residential units. They said the staff deal with bullying appropriately. Posters on young people's notice boards make it clear that bullying will not be tolerated. The staff confirmed that some name-calling also occurs. The school has subscribed to a counter bullying support service from an external agency. However, this has not started yet due to staff shortages at the agency.

A risk assessment for each young person has been undertaken in relation to bullying. However, this does not separately assess the likelihood, seriousness and response for the risks of each young person bullying and being bullied. This means it is harder for the staff to have a full understanding of each young person's needs and consequently a recommendation made at the previous inspection has been repeated.

Young people rarely go missing from the school although a protocol is in place should this happen.

The use of sanctions and physical intervention in the residential units is very rare and overall the use of sanctions in the school is fair. Young people and staff also commented that behaviour has become more calm over recent months. The school has adopted a new approach of encouraging young people to take time out when feeling angry or distressed. Young people also now receive support in anger management and an educational psychologist offers them one-to-one support to as well.

In the seven weeks leading up to the inspection there had been 20 incidents of physical intervention in the school. These incidents are summarised in a bound book and recorded in greater detail in loose leaf major incident reports.

The premises are maintained in a safe condition. Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, boilers and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires. Any concerns arising from such tests are recorded and signed off when addressed.

Five weeks before the inspection, a fire safety consultant conducted a fire risk assessment of the whole school. This resulted in 23 recommendations including 15 recommendations which were to be met within a one month timescale. Due to an administrative error, this report was only received by the school two days before the inspection and it is in the process of attending to these recommendations. Additionally, the school is expected to conduct a fire risk assessment every year, but it had been over three years since this had happened.

A risk assessment is conducted to consider the hazards that may affect young people in the residential units. However, while the likelihood and seriousness are assessed separately, the measures to address all hazards are the same. This means the staff are not adequately informed about how to address individual hazards of concern.

Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that staff recruited to work with young people are suitable and safe people. Young people also help in the selection of new staff.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Outcomes associated with how young people are supported to enjoy and achieve in life are excellent.

All young people said the residential staff help them with their homework and each residential unit has a computer and a variety of books and games. Young people are also fully supported to gain skills and knowledge which will be useful when they have left school and are living a more independent lifestyle. For example, the staff support

them to understand how to use buses and trains, young people receive careers advice and gain experience of enterprise. There are also useful links with external support agencies.

Young people receive excellent individual support. All young people said they feel they are listened to and nearly all those who completed a survey said they thought the care staff were 'great'. One young person summed this up by saying 'this place is mint, it's chilled and an awesome place to be'.

Young people are fully supported to understand rights alongside responsibilities. They gain very beneficial experience of other cultures. For example, four young people from the residential units had recently returned from an eight-day trip to Turkey where they learned about the Islamic culture. The school also has links to a school in Tanzania and teachers from there visit Elemore and meet and work with the young people. The staff said that as a result of this young people are now significantly more tolerant of differences between themselves and others.

There are also a very wide range of activities including weekly attendance at a youth club where young people benefit from interaction with others in the local community.

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

The provision is good.

The school has a strong ethos of consultation. For example, one young person said 'we have regular discussions with staff, and can see them on our own as well'. There are also regular school council meetings and residential meetings and each young person has a personal tutor and a teaching tutor with whom they can discuss issues of concern. Young people can also make suggestions about how the residential units should be run and outcomes are displayed on the notice board.

A well-structured admission procedure is in place. Young people are always invited to look around the school before deciding if they want to join. The staff also discuss each young person before a decision is made as to whether the young person is appropriate for the school. Similar discussions take place before a young person can stay in the residential units.

Each young person takes part in a progress and achievement meeting once a term and the outcomes of these are recorded in each young person's case file. In addition, each young person in a residential unit has a care plan. These plans are reviewed at least once a term and fully involve each young person, their parent and key staff. However, they do not describe all the issues recommended by the national minimum standard. For example, they do not adequately describe health needs including medication, contact arrangements and cultural or religious needs.

Young people are also fully supported to maintain contact with their families and carers. All the young people who completed a survey said that they can keep in contact with people who are important to them. The staff confirmed that young



people can make and receive telephone calls to their families and carers at all reasonable times.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

The residential units are well-maintained, homely and comfortable and young people like their bedrooms. For example, one young person said 'I like my bedroom as it's comfortable and warm'. There is a rolling programme of decoration, replacement and modification. One of the units has been fitted with new showers and a similar refurbishment is planned for the other unit. Young people help to choose the design and décor of these improvements and they have recently chosen new bedding and furniture.

Closed circuit television is used in some of the school's corridors and it can be used to identify incidents and examine allegations of inappropriate behaviour. However, use of the system is not described in the school's Statement of Purpose and so people external to the school are less well-informed about its existence.

Pupils have access through staff to cordless phones which enables them to make and receive free personal phone calls in the privacy of their own rooms.

The school promotes links with the community. For example, young people attend a local youth club once a week and the residential staff enable them to learn from experiences such as eating in restaurants and going to the theatre. The school is also involved with external groups in a variety of projects and groups of pupils from primary schools occasionally visit the school as well.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The school has a clearly written Statement of Purpose. This includes the necessary information required by the national minimum standard and is awaiting approval by the school governors. Young people also have a children's guide to the school which is informative and written in a very user-friendly style.

The staffing levels in the residential units are appropriate. For example, there are always at least two members of staff on duty in each unit and frequently there are more. The same members of staff work the same rota each week and the school has a policy of never using agency staff. This provides for good continuity of relationships for the young people. A young person summarised this well by saying 'there are always enough staff on duty and we know them well'.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The staff fully support young people to express their views and to develop their potential. They enable young people to develop a full understanding of other cultures and to be acceptant of

differences between themselves and others. Young people are enabled to make choices in a variety of issues such as meals, activities and personal matters such as the style and décor of their bedroom. They also receive excellent one-to-one support through the personal tutor and teaching tutor system and they have a say in how the school and residential units are run. The staffing arrangements in the residential units also help to provide young people with a strong sense of consistency and security. Structures to enable close liaison between the staff and parents also strengthens consistency between life at school and at home.

The staff team feel well-supported because the headteacher or head of care is always available on site 24- hours a day. Staff rotas are designed appropriately and staff hours are within the guidelines of the working time directive.

The staff have access to a wide variety of training. Over 80% of the residential staff are qualified to level three of the National Vocational Qualification in Care and the head of care holds a professional qualification in social work. He uses the training recommended by the national minimum standards as a benchmark and ensures that the residential staff receive training in this. All staff take part in five staff development days per year and these are supplemented by other training opportunities throughout the year and by individual staff attending specific courses. From time to time specialists, who are external to the school, also provide training in specialist subjects such as attachment disorder, and sex and relationship education.

The staff receive one-to-one formal supervision from a senior member of staff once every half term. Each session is recorded and the member of staff receives a copy of the discussion. The team of residential staff also have regular staff meetings throughout each term. However, annual appraisals are not yet in place and consequently a recommendation made at the previous inspection has been repeated. Appropriate supervision and support arrangements are also in place for the headteacher.

A system for senior staff to monitor and sign relevant records has only very recently been introduced. It is therefore not yet possible to evaluate its effectiveness. Although various senior members of staff monitor some of the records, there are not always signatures to indicate that this has happened. Consequently, Ofsted cannot be assured that the school's ability to monitor its own practices and identify shortfalls or concerns.

At least once every half term, an independent person makes an unannounced visit to the school to monitor and report on the quality of care. The report of each visit covers all the issues recommended by the national minimum standard. However, the reports are not always clear about recommendations that the school should follow. The reports also do not indicate whether any previous recommendations have been met. Consequently the monitoring is not as valuable as it could be. In addition, the school does not make a record when any recommendations have been met. This makes it harder for Ofsted to be assured that the suggestions made in the reports are being followed.

## 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 ancillary staff receive training in child protection (NMS 5.8)
- ensure that each young person's risk assessment for bullying separately assesses the risk of being bullied and the risk of bullying others (NMS 6.3)
- 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 positive steps are taken to keep children, staff and visitors safe from risk from fire hazards, in accordance with fire legislation and guidance. In particular this relates to responding to recommendations arising from the annual fire risk assessment in a timely manner (NMS 26.1).
- ensure that each young person's residential placement plan addresses the issues recommended in the national minimum standard (NMS 17.5)
- ensure that the visual monitoring system (CCTV) is not used inside the school unless it is described in the Statement of Purpose (NMS 23.7)
- ensure that all staff receive an annual appraisal (NMS 30.6)
- ensure that the head or delegated senior members of staff monitors and sign the relevant records every half term or every term, as appropriate (NMS 32.2)
- make a record when any recommendations or actions arising from half-termly monitoring are completed. (NMS 33.5)