

# Springfields School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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<b>Inspector</b>	Thomas Webber
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<b>Setting address</b>	Springfields School, Curzon Street, CALNE, Wiltshire, SN11 0DS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01249 814125
<b>Email</b>	admin@springfields.wilts.sch.uk
<b>Registered person</b>	Wiltshire Council: Director of Social Services
<b>Head/ Principal</b>	Tristan Williams
<b>Nominated person</b>	Tristan Williams
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	01/07/2009

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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 is a specialist sports college and local authority school which provides residential accommodation for 68 young people of mixed gender, ranging in age from 10 to 17 years. All young people have a statement of special education need as a result of emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties. However, most have additional complex needs. The school has had specialist sports college status since September 2005 and its second specialisation is special educational needs inclusion.

The school's ethos is based upon cognitive behavioural therapy and aims to help young people recognise the causes and triggers of their behaviour, and so provide opportunities for them to realise their full potential both academically and socially. It also provides tuition in externally credited vocational areas for up to 400 students from 19 mainstream and special schools. All young people are expected to return home or to other residential provisions at weekends and at holidays.

The school is situated in a rural town within 10 acres of gardens. There is an extensive range of recreational facilities on site.

## **Summary**

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This announced key inspection took place over three days, covering all of the residential special school's key standards. This forms part of the annual inspection programme to examine the standard of care provided to young people.

The care practices established by the school ensure that outstanding outcomes are achieved for young people, where an excellent standard of care is provided to them. The experience of living at the school continues to make a positive and significant impact on the lives of young people both socially, emotionally and educationally. This was endorsed by the questionnaires received prior to and comments made during the inspection by young people, their parents/carers and other professionals, observations made and records seen.

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

Three recommendations were made at the last inspection relating to recruitment, supervision and administration of records. Prompt action was taken to address these deficiencies.

## **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Young people live in a healthy environment where their physical, emotional and health care needs are fully met. The staff team, in conjunction with the in house specialist support team, work hard to promote the health, welfare and well-being of young people. They provide young people with the necessary individual support to assist in developing their self-esteem and dealing with any specific emotional and behaviour issues. The specialist support team comprises of trained counsellors who also provide family support; a speech and language therapist and an occupational therapist. The school supports young people to access and attend all health care appointments with suitable records being maintained. Medical consent forms and individual health care plans are also established for young people. In addition to lessons in personal social and health education (PSHE), the local nurse provides support and advice to young people regarding a range of health care issues, such as personal relationships, sexual health, drugs and smoking.

Safe medication storage practices are maintained with all medication being kept securely in facilities in line with best practice. Robust systems are established to ensure that suitable records are maintained for the receipt, administration and return of unwanted medication. Staff, who are trained in the safe administration of medicines, administer all medication to young people.

The school has achieved the National Healthy Schools Award which focuses on the young people's diet and exercise programme. The school actively promotes healthy eating for young people with satisfactory and varied menus being established in consultation with them. Consultation takes place primarily through the school council. Young people are provided with opportunities to try meals from different cultures as well as catering for their specific cultural and dietary needs. A selection of fresh fruit is readily available to young people on a daily basis. Opportunities are available for young people to be involved in various aspects of budgeting, shopping, preparation and the cooking of meals with the support of staff. This is particularly so for young people accommodated in the Hafan unit and to a lesser degree in Bowood unit. Mealtimes are conducted within a relaxed and congenial atmosphere. Young people commented very positively about the quality and quantity of meals offered, stating they receive plenty of food and second helpings are always available. The main kitchen facilities have been extended and refurbished since the last inspection.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Staff actively promote the rights of young people by ensuring that their privacy and dignity are respected. Staff knock on young people's bedroom doors before entering. Staff show good awareness of gender issues when dealing with young people of the opposite sex. Young people's information is kept secure and staff understand the need to keep their information confidential as well as being clear about the limits of

maintaining confidentiality.

Clear policies and procedures are established for dealing with complaints and young people are provided with information about this process. Copies of this procedure are also readily displayed within each of the residential units. The process of making a complaint is also regularly discussed with the young people during their house meetings. Young people confirmed that they know how to complain and they are supported to raise any concerns openly. Young people also feel confident in discussing any concerns with staff as well as knowing that they can also discuss any issues with the independent visitors or counsellors. The school has received no complaints for a significant period. However, previous records demonstrate that all concerns are taken seriously and are responded to and addressed without delay with good outcomes achieved for young people.

Young people live in an environment where their welfare is promoted and they are protected from abuse. Staff have a very good understanding of the needs of the young people and how to safeguard them. Appropriate child protection policies and procedures are established. All staff receive regular child protection training. The headteacher and head of social education are the designated child protection coordinators for the school. Since the last inspection the school has made four child protection referrals and 13 incidents of concerns have also been raised. Robust records are maintained in relation to these referrals and incidents which include all action taken and the outcomes achieved.

The school maintains a zero tolerance in respect to bullying and measures are taken to protect young people from bullying. An anti-bullying policy is established which is conveyed to young people prior to admission and discussed with them at the beginning of each term. It is recognised by all concerned that incidents of bullying do occur, however, these are promptly and effectively addressed by staff. Written records are maintained of all incidents. However, during the inspection the school reviewed its recording system to ensure that it records the action taken and whether the victim is satisfied with this. Surveys are conducted by the school each term and involve all young people, allowing for the identification of potential bullies and victims. The surveys also assist the school in determining whether progress in addressing specific issues are successful. Parents of young people are invited to assist the school in working through individually identified issues where necessary.

There is a clear system for the reporting and recording of any event where a young person goes absent without authority. Records show a continuation in the reduction of young people absconding since the last inspection. All absentees are recorded and monitored with all relevant parties being informed. However, during the inspection the recording system was amended to provide a more comprehensive record which details the reasons for young people's absence and any action taken in the light of those reasons.

The school assists young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour through encouragement, reinforcement of clear boundaries and recognition of positive behaviour together with the use of sanctions and physical intervention when

necessary. Staff are trained in the use of physical intervention with appropriate records being maintained where this method of control is used. The records of sanctions have been reviewed and redesigned to provide greater detail of the behaviour resulting in the sanction and to address the effectiveness of any sanctions used.

There are the four progressive and sequential units and movement between them requires young people to sustain a period of appropriate behaviour. This in turn provides them with greater privileges, responsibilities and freedom. Each unit monitors and assesses the young people through a behaviour attainment system using points. It is a positive incentive scheme which young people can access and where they are encouraged to achieve their individual targets. Sports, information communications technology and community work also impact on the behaviour of the young people, which helps them to develop leadership skills, self-worth and confidence. The behaviour management system enables the staff to operate in a consistent and fair manner in dealing with the day to day issues of the young people. This system is currently being reviewed in light of the changing needs of young people being accepted into the school. The young people are proud of what they achieve individually and in groups. They are clear about the expectations placed on them by the school and conduct themselves in an exemplary way being polite and well mannered.

The school has established clear health and safety policies and procedures to ensure that staff and young people are appropriately safeguarded. The school takes positive steps to keep young people and staff safe from the risk of fire and other hazards in accordance with health and safety and fire legislation and guidance. A tour of the premises identified no significant health and safety issues. Young people and staff regularly practise fire evacuation procedures and the various fire safety records are kept up to date. Detailed risk assessments are carried out in respect to all activities undertaken by young people, to the building and with regard to young people themselves. These are reviewed and updated where appropriate.

Since the last inspection the school has reviewed its recruitment practices to ensure that a robust system is now established for the protection of young people. New staff no longer commence employment in the school until all the relevant checks are carried out.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Young people who attend Springfields School stay at the school during the week. The school maintains a very high level of attendance being 95.2% for 2010, given that young people go home at weekends. Excellent cooperation and communication exists between the residential and teaching staff. The school is a specialist sports college with special educational needs inclusion being its second specialist subject. The school continues to expand the vast range of sporting facilities already offered to the young people. Other activities are also provided to meet the talent and interests

of the young people. It also provides a number of vocational opportunities, such as catering, motor vehicle maintenance, building and construction, sport and hair and beauty. Activities undertaken during the school day are encouraged and built upon by the care staff who also assist the young people with their homework. Breakfast and after school clubs are organised for the young people, with many tending to be sport orientated. All young people have a statement of special educational needs with most also having a learning support programme.

Exercise, sport and physical education take place throughout the day. Young people participate in various sporting activities during curriculum time. This adds to the optional activities held in the residential units in the evenings. The school also plays a key role in the Wales and South West Special Schools Sports Federation and residential courses held by the school allow for participation in outdoor and adventurous activities.

The school continues to provide an exceptional range of recreational facilities for young people to engage in. There is a good balance between organised activities and free time. There are also age and gender appropriate activities provided. Good community contacts are encouraged by the life skills programme. Young people continue to raise money for charities and have regular contact with local elderly people's homes including hosting evenings of entertainment for them. Young people also make visits to local primary schools to assist with physical education as part their junior sports leaders' award.

The emotional literacy centre on site is managed by the school which supports a number of disaffected young people from across the North Wiltshire federation of primary and secondary schools in order to prevent them from being excluded. Various projects are undertaken to take the school out into the community and the young people in the community use the school facilities at weekends. The school is also twinned with a school in China which provides communication between the young people and it is hoped to have reciprocal visits in the future.

The individual needs and wishes of the young people are clearly identified in their care and support plans and other associated documentation. These detail help, support and guidance that young people require. Young people can also access a range of specialist intervention. The young people also have access to the children's rights officer, VOICE (an independent advocacy service) where they can discuss any issues affecting them.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are encouraged and supported to make decisions and contribute to and influence the way the residential provision of the school is run. Young people are given every opportunity to express their views and opinions through a range of forums, such as house meetings, emotional intelligence sessions, individual tutorials as well as to raise and discuss any issues on a day to day basis. In addition, an

active school council effectively operates to improve facilities for young people.

Young people live in a structured, safe, secure but very supportive environment where very positive and relaxed relationships exist between the staff and young people. These relationships are based on mutual respect and understanding. A warm, friendly and relaxed atmosphere has been created within the units where young people can freely express their views about a range of issues and feel listened to by staff. Staff actively celebrate the progress and achievements made by young people and are very committed to the care of them. Staff undertake their duties in a warm, caring and professional manner and young people are relaxed and at ease in their company. Young people spoke very positively about the care and support provided to them by the staff. Young people are very appreciative of the experience of living at the school which has had a significant effect on their lives socially, emotionally and educationally. They feel that their self-esteem and confidence has grown and they now believe in themselves and their abilities. This positive attitude is very much endorsed and reiterated by their parents/carers.

Young people's needs are assessed and detailed care and support plans are established which identify how their needs are met. These also contain input from young people. The care plans detail the young people's strengths, targets, needs and progress achieved. They are reviewed yearly and updated to reflect the changing needs. Young people receive and are encouraged to attend their annual review which considers their progress and whether the placement is still relevant. The school works well with other agencies, keeping them well informed of any incidents and the progress made by young people.

Staff are very committed to supporting young people to maintain the agreed contact with their families during school time either by phone, letters, overnight visits home, or by parents visiting them. Staff also ensure that young people's parents/carers are kept fully informed about the wellbeing and progress of their sons/daughters. These include the use of home/school diaries; young people's reviews; general contact and open days. Young people's parents/carers commented extremely highly about the care provided and are very appreciative of the high level of support and guidance provided to them. Parents/carers also commented that they are made to feel very welcome and treated with respect by staff when they visit.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are provided with the opportunity to acquire a range of independent skills through the life skills programme which is well established by the school. Preparation for leaving care begins on young people's first day at the school in line with its stated ethos and structure. However, prominence is given to this when young people reach the Hafan unit, where they are expected to assume greater responsibilities. Opportunities are provided for the development of knowledge and skills needed by young people for their future living arrangements. Transition plans are established and the Connexions officer is routinely involved with the older young

people and, in conjunction with their parents/carers and the school, works to identify further placements for them after they leave. The school continues to achieve 100% of placements for young people leaving the school either in college, apprenticeships or work.

Young people live in one of four boarding units within the school. These are maintained to a good standard, being clean, tidy and comfortable. Attention has been given to creating homely environments for young people. The units provide good communal space, together with bath, shower and toilet facilities, to meet the individual and collective needs of young people. Suitable locks are also fitted to the bath, shower and toilet doors to promote the privacy and dignity of young people. Not all young people are provided with their own bedrooms, particularly within the first two houses. However, young people are able to personalise their bedrooms/individual spaces to their own tastes. The school continues to make improvements to the accommodation to enhance the young people's living environment within the constraints of the buildings.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Diversity and equality are promoted very effectively in all aspects of the service. Policies and procedures relating to equal opportunities are well established. The home promotes understanding and tolerance taking into account the diverse individual needs of young people.

A clear Statement of Purpose is established which accurately describes the level of service young people can expect to receive and how they will be cared for. The statement of purpose together with a range of other relevant documents forms part of the welcome pack. A copy of this is provided to young people and their parents/carers and gives them clear information about the school.

The school is committed to providing sufficient staff on duty throughout the day and night to meet the individual and collective needs of young people. Higher staffing levels are provided within Phoenix and Yanbu units to meet its ethos and structure with lower staffing levels within the remaining two units. Agency staff are only occasionally used with the school relying upon existing staff to cover for any short term staff shortage. This ensures that young people receive consistency and continuity of care. Management cover is also readily available throughout the day and night.

Young people are looked after by a staff team who are trained and competent to meet their needs. New staff are provided with a thorough induction programme. Staff continue to be supported and encouraged to update their knowledge, skill and expertise by attending a range of courses including mandatory and more specialist training. The residential staff commented very positively about training opportunities available to them, some of which includes joint training days with education staff.

The head of social education holds the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 4 in management. At the time of the inspection, 66% of the care staff team had obtained the NVQ at level 3 in the care of children and young people with a further two due to complete the course in February 2011. Four new staff are due to commence the new diploma at level 3 (instead of the NVQ) in January 2011.

Young people are looked after by a staff team who are themselves properly managed and supported in safeguarding and promoting their welfare. Effective systems have been established to ensure good communication is maintained between different staff disciplines within the school to ensure young people receive consistency of care. Regular staff meetings and daily handover meetings are also held within the residential units to ensure that staff keep up to date with regard to all issues pertaining to their individual units and the young people. An open door policy is established within the school with regard to supervision. Staff also receive both formal and informal supervision and feel that they are well supported. Annual appraisals are also provided to staff at the recommended intervals. New staff are now receiving formal supervision fortnightly during the first two terms of their employment.

The school maintains the range of records required which are clear, comprehensive and detailed. Evidence is available to confirm that the records are monitored by both management and governors.

The headteacher, who is supported by a strong management team, provides clear vision for the future and also provides very strong leadership. Staff are highly committed to providing the best level of care and personal support to young people and are consistently looking at ways of improving their practice. Staff feel valued and that their opinions are listened to.

The governing body ensures that the care and welfare of the young people within the school's boarding provision is continually monitored. Unannounced visits are carried out at least every half term by a governor and reports are produced outlining these visits.