

Cedar House School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Leonard Hird
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Date of last inspection	01/12/2009

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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

The school is a co-educational Residential Special School for young people exhibiting emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school caters for young people of either gender aged seven to 16 years on a day or residential basis. The school is situated close to the centre of a small market town in Lancashire.

The residential accommodation comprises of five separate residential units, each with its own facilities. Three of the residential units house only male boarders, one houses female boarders only and the other houses a mix of male and female boarders.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was an announced, key inspection. Residential pupils at the school are provided with a high quality service which consistently meet their diverse needs. The dedicated staff team work in partnership with parents, carers and other professionals to ensure high-quality residential services are delivered. Through the provision of excellent planning, assessment and individually targeted programmes, young people's emotional, physical and educational needs are promoted. Young people have access to a wide range of activities, opportunities and resources which aid their development. Comprehensive policies, guidance and procedures implemented by a well qualified and trained staff team ensure that young people's welfare is safeguarded.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were three recommendations made at the last inspection. The school was required to ensure the designated school nurse has access to a named doctor for professional guidance and consultation. This has been addressed and clinical supervision is now occurring with a named GP.

The second recommendation made required the school to ensure that young people are provided with adequate quantities of suitably prepared wholesome food, having regard to their needs and wishes. This recommendation has been met and the school's management team are committed to developing further and improving the quality and quantity of food served at the school.

The final recommendation was to ensure that all parts of the school's risk assessment process is fully completed before undertaking an activity. All risk assessments are now fully completed before activities take place.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive excellent health care and guidance from a well qualified and experienced staff team, which is ensuring their health care needs are identified and promoted. Young people's health needs are regularly reviewed and this helps towards the development of their individual and comprehensive health plans. There is an experienced registered nurse to oversee and monitor the healthcare needs of the young people. The school's health programme is enhanced further through the provision of an educational psychologist, trained counsellors and a speech and language therapist.

Young people are registered with the local GP practice and are able to access optical, hearing, speech and language and dental services through the school. Up-to-date parental permission for the administration of medication and emergency health needs is maintained by the school on the young person's health record. Members of staff maintain excellent relationships and communication with young people's parents, health professionals and carers to ensure that health matters, when they arise, are addressed.

Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place for all health matters including first aid treatment and the safe storage and administration of medication. The arrangements for the safe administration, recording, storage and disposal of medicines are very good. All of the staff are first aid qualified and staff designated to administer medication have completed a course in the safe handling and administration of medication.

Young people take their meals in the school dining room or their house, where appropriate. The meals are healthy in content and cooked by qualified catering staff. All of the meals at the school take account of any specialist or cultural dietary needs of the young people. Young people can influence the type of food prepared at the school by working with the catering manager, the school's independent food consultant and inputting into the school council.

Meals prepared and cooked at the school are based on a healthy eating programme. Young people confirm that the quality of the meals has improved since the last inspection and that there is a wider range of food to choose from, including different types of salads, meats and desserts. However, a small number of young people still feel that in their opinion there is still room for improvement in the meals, particularly in the area of choice.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The policies, procedures and guidance for staff on privacy and confidentiality relating to young people attending the school are clear and unambiguous. Members of staff show a high regard for the privacy of the young people and address sensitively all issues relating to privacy and dignity. Young people confirm that they can talk to members of staff about confidential matters and feel safe that staff will not disclose this information inappropriately.

The school has effective and robust policies in place regarding its complaints procedures for families and young people. Parents, young people and staff are able to access information which details how concerns or complaints will be addressed. The young people are provided with an easy to understand handbook that explains how to complain. Detailed records are maintained of any complaint in a bound book and these are monitored regularly by a senior member of staff.

The school has a comprehensive Safeguarding Policy and Procedure in place which is compatible with the Local Authorities Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) policy and procedure. These policies are well established and understood by staff and there are excellent links with the LSCB. The school ensures that the appropriate bodies are notified when safeguarding issues arise. All members of staff receive regular training in safeguarding and are fully aware of their roles in ensuring the safety of young people. The head of care and head teacher are the designated safeguarding officers for the school. Any information relating to safeguarding issues is kept confidentially and securely in the designated person's office.

The school has an up-to-date policy and procedure in place that comprehensively addresses the countering of bullying. There is informative documentation on addressing bullying issues on display for young people throughout the school and the residential houses. Young people confirm they feel very safe at the school and are supportive of each other. Records are maintained of any reported incidence of bullying occurring and these are monitored and acted upon by staff. Young people confirm they are aware of the school's anti-bullying policy and how it is implemented. Information is displayed prominently throughout the building on how to contact the independent listener or independent youth support agencies, such as ChildLine, if young people wish to speak to somebody who does not work at the school. Young people agree that they do not always get on with each other but confirm there is very little bullying occurring. One young person stated 'they don't allow bullying here'; another stated that 'if bullying happened the staff deal with it'.

The school places a strong emphasis on positive behaviour management. Young people are encouraged to behave in an acceptable manner through effective behavioural management strategies, such as deflection and diffusion, and through the positive encouragement of good behaviour. Members of staff receive annually the appropriate levels of safeguarding and behavioural management training including physical intervention. There is a detailed policy, procedure and protocol on

the actions to be taken for young people who are absent without authority.

There are comprehensive risk assessments in place regarding the care needs of young people and also in respect of equipment and premises. A fire risk assessment is in place and young people confirm that fire drills are held at different times throughout the school term. Regular checks of the premises and servicing of equipment, such as, portable electric appliance testing, ensures that these are maintained in good order and ensure that young people live in a safe environment.

The school undertakes pre-employment vetting checks on all staff including volunteers to ensure they are suitable to work at the school. The personnel files and single central register are very well documented and information is easy to access. All members of staff working at the school have been recruited in accordance with the national minimum standards and educational regulations. All of this information is kept securely and in line with the Data Protection Act . Arrangements for the monitoring of visitors to the school are excellent. These measures effectively contribute towards the prevention of young people being exposed to potential abusers.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are provided with very good levels of support which enables them to access a wide range of activities and educational programmes. The school offers a 24-hour curriculum and young people's individual programmes function across both school and residence, providing a continuity of care and learning. Young people's residential key workers are involved proactively in this process and are helping young people to achieve a high level of success.

Young people receive excellent support from residential and education staff to address their often complex needs. Assessment and care planning arrangements, which are of a high quality, are well co-ordinated by the young person's key worker. A strong emphasis is placed by the school on keeping parents and carers involved in all aspects of a young person's life, including supporting young people while they adapt to independent life after school. The school has excellent links with local health and therapy services and has made resources available so that these can be accessed by young people in school, thereby, reducing time spent away from school.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Members of staff actively encourage young people to take part in the day-to-day running of the residential houses by involvement in regular house meetings, the use of questionnaires, informal consultations and, more formally, through the school council. The senior management team of the school operate an open door policy for young people to speak to them about any matter. Surveys provide many positive comment on practice. Management practice also responds to concerns that are highlighted. Young people confirm they can influence how the school is managed through their involvement in these different forums.

All admissions to the school are very well planned and young people are fully supported by members of staff throughout the placement. Parents and placing authorities are provided with comprehensive updates on the progress a young person is making at the school. Statutory and educational reviews are taking place and educational statements are updated annually. Young people are actively encouraged by staff to take part in all of their meetings to ensure their voice is heard. There is a structured and extremely effective keyworker system in place which supports young people in all aspects of their life while attending school. Staff seek routinely to build working relationships with the young people, parents and other professionals involved in their lives. Young people and the school work closely with the 'Connexions' service to ensure that young people are involved fully in the planning process for post-16 education and independent living.

The school actively encourages young people to keep in appropriate contact with their family and friends by different means including the use of email and telephone. Parents can visit the school and young people confirm that it is easy to keep in touch with friends and family members.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The residential houses provide excellent facilities and plenty of space to meet the needs of young people. The residential accommodation is well decorated, maintained and furnished to a very pleasing standard. All of the young people's bedrooms are single occupancy and well equipped. The bedrooms are personalised with posters and photographs which reflect the young person's interests. There are good levels of bathing, showering and private toileting facilities available in the different houses. The bedrooms visited by invitation during the inspection were found to be well decorated, warm and personalised by the young person. Young people confirm they are very happy with both their individual and communal living space.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school provides a high quality residential service which values young people's diversity and promotes equality. Young people's rights are respected fully by a staff team dedicated to ensuring young people have access to a wide range of education, care and health support. Members of staff receive training in equality and diversity and actively encourage young people to be supportive of each other. The school operates an 'open door' policy so that young people can speak with any member of staff about any matter. Young people indicate that staff are very good at listening to them and this allows for opportunity to voice their views, opinions and concerns. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of young people is being addressed through the school's personal, health and social care programme.

The school has a well-written and up-to-date Statement of Purpose which describes accurately the ethos and management structure of the school. The senior management team provides excellent support for a well-qualified and experienced care staff team. There are very good systems of staff supervision and appraisal in place and care staff have access to an training programme. The high level of commitment to staff training and development by the school ensures that young people's needs are well met and the quality of care provided is of a high quality. Staff consider the support received from management to be of a 'high standard'.

Staffing levels are meeting the current needs and numbers of young people residing at the school. The quality of recording is generally of a high standard. Young people's records are comprehensive in content and maintained confidentially. Staff are very clear about their care responsibilities, balancing their work so that the needs of the young people are met and that a safe and caring environment is created.

There is a school development plan in which the future of the residential sector features strongly. The leadership team has very effective systems in place for monitoring the effectiveness of the residential provision. Very good systems are in place to make regular reports to the parent company on the functioning of the residential houses.