

The Marchant-Holliday School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Paul Clark
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Date of last inspection	03/02/2010

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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

The Marchant-Holliday School provides residential and day education for up to 32 boarders and eight day pupils aged from five to 12 years old who have special education needs. There are two boarding houses for younger and older boarders. All boarders go home for the weekend at least once every two weeks.

The school is situated in rural surroundings three miles from the nearest town. The residential accommodation is contained in the newly refurbished main house and in an adjoining building completed in September 2004.

Marchant-Holliday School is an independent non-profit making charity. It is managed by the Board of Governors, who are also Trustees, and by a senior management team.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This announced, full inspection found that the boarding arrangements in this residential special school are outstanding. Staff are well trained, professionally qualified and are well supervised by competent management. The teaching, care and domestic staff work as a well organised team to provide children with a high level of care. The children's guide needs to be amended to inform children that they may address any complaints directly to Ofsted, together with the contact details of Ofsted. The school should produce an annual review of the quality of boarders' welfare and make this available to the board of governors.

Improvements since the last inspection

No action requirements or recommendations were made at the previous inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The arrangements in place to attend to the health needs of children placed at the school are outstanding. All children placed at the school have a statement of special educational needs. This statement includes a description of their health needs. The school completes an admission checklist on each child in consultation with parents. This records the child's health history and any current conditions as well as recording contact details of their home GP and of any other health professional involved. All

children boarding at the school are registered with a local GP, dentist and optician or will remain with their home practitioner if parents prefer. Parents are required to ensure that routine health checks are carried out but the school will undertake these if parents are unable to. There is a well equipped and well ordered medical surgery at the school which is overseen by the school matron who is a qualified nurse. Medication, including controlled drugs, prescribed and household medication is correctly stored and administered. The school attempts to reduce the level of controlled medication that children receive in consultation with relevant professionals. The matron trains all staff who administer medication and a dated record of this training is kept. The school has a sick bay where any infectious children can be isolated if necessary. There are well stocked first aid boxes positioned at key areas around the school. A sufficient number of care and teaching staff have been trained in first aid to ensure that there is always a member of staff on duty with these skills.

The school will refer any children in need of psychiatric or psychologist assessment to the local child and adolescent mental health service. The school will also access the services of a trained counsellor, play therapist and occupational therapist if the child's statement states that they require any of these services. The school provides children with attendance at their in-house learning support unit and at a behaviour management unit should their needs assessment determine that they need any of these services. The provision of these additional health services ensures that children receive an excellent level of health care.

Staff are trained to support, in a discreet and sympathetic manner, those children who may bed wet or soil. Bed linen is changed weekly or more often if required. The school has an in house laundry service where soiled linen can be appropriated cleaned. The school has a well equipped kitchen which is managed by a kitchen manager who oversees the catering staff and service. An environmental health officer (EHO) inspection has taken place within the past 12 months. The report of the EHO inspection states that "the kitchen and food preparation areas are immaculate and well run". Menu plans seen indicate that a varied, balanced and nutritious diet is provided. There are currently no children placed who require special diets although the catering manager states that their needs would be met on an individual basis. Young people are consulted about their food choices at school council meetings and at general school forums. Young people interviewed stated that they are happy with the food provided.

The school has a comprehensive Personal, Health and Social Education (PSHE) programme which provides children with age appropriate information about smoking, drug and alcohol misuse, and sexual health. The programme also provides children with an understanding of equality and diversity issues including gender and race relationships.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The school has excellent policies and procedures in place which help to ensure children's safety and wellbeing. The school has clearly written policies on safeguarding children, dealing with complaints, bullying, discipline, the use of physical restraint, the use of sanctions and action to be taken in the event of a child going missing or absconding. These policies are appropriately reviewed. Staff acquaint themselves with these policies as part of their induction and sign to confirm that they have read and understand these policies. Supervising staff check their understanding of these policies. All staff have received training in safeguarding children and this training is updated at appropriate frequencies. The school has an appointed designated child protection officer (DCPO) to whom staff will refer any safeguarding concern. The DCPO and senior school staff have been trained to an enhanced level by the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). No safeguarding concerns have been referred to the appropriate local authorities within the past 12 months. The school have appointed an independent visitor who visits the school one afternoon a month and to whom children may raise any issues of concern.

The school carries out effective staff vetting and recruitment practices according to LSCB recommendations. All staff and other professionals having contact with children at the school have an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. School staff at least two professional references which are followed up verbally, and complete a 'Self Disclosure Declaration of Health' questionnaire. If taxis are used to transport children the school ensures that taxi companies and their drivers are regulated to comply with CRB checks. Rigorous vetting of staff ensures that children are safeguarded from potential dangers of living in an institutional environment.

The school has comprehensively written information documents available to all stakeholders about the school's complaints procedure. This includes full information given to children within the Children's Guide. This does not however inform them that they may make complaints directly to Ofsted or provide them with the contact details of Ofsted. The record of complaints received and actions taken indicate that the schools responses to complaints received are appropriate.

Very little evidence of bullying was drawn from conversation with children. There is a post box system in place where children can report any incidents of bullying anonymously. Children spoken to felt that bullying would be dealt with effectively if brought to the attention of staff.

The school has identified written sanctions which are known to young people and a behavioural management system is in place based on the acquisition of reward points. The children spoken to felt that the system was fair and equitable. All staff are trained in-house in the use of physical restraint and this training is appropriately updated. A record is kept of any incidences where physical restraint has been applied. This record and the record of sanctions applied is monitored by the headteacher.

The school carries out and effectively records its fire safety measures including evacuation drills and alarm and equipment checks. Staff are trained in basic fire safety measures. The school has appointed the school caretaker as the designated officer responsible for coordinating fire safety within the school and this person has been appropriately trained to undertake this role.

The Bursar/Business Manager acts as the member of the senior management team with responsibility for health and safety issues. All parts of the premises and external areas with the potential for harm have been appropriately risk assessed by a specialist agency annually commissioned by the school. The school has a swimming pool. All staff who oversee swimming have been trained in pool safety and there is always a member of staff in attendance who is a qualified lifeguard.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children live in a supportive and encouraging environment where their group and individual needs are met. There is good communication between teaching and care staff and forums are in place for the exchange of information about individual children. Teaching staff are actively involved in the residential and out of school activities and care staff support young people with their educational needs. Good systems are in place to keep parents informed about their children's educational and behavioural progress. Each child has a statement of special educational need and individual education plans and care plans are in place for each child which clearly identify their individual needs.

The school employs a qualified counsellor two days each week who will do work with individual children to help them with their social and educational progress. The school also has an independent visitor who is well known to the children and who they can speak to in private about any area of concern. The school has a behavioural support unit and a learning support unit where children's individual needs are also supported. Each child has an appointed member of staff who acts as their key worker or 'Special Person', and who will have a unique knowledge of a particular child.

Each child's bedroom has a desk and study area and there are designated study areas around the building for out of school study. There is a well stocked library which the children can access. There are appropriately safeguarded IT systems in place which the young people can access under staff supervision.

The children enjoy a vast range of evening and weekend activities both within and around the campus. There is a suitably safeguarded swimming pool and quad bike and motorised go-karting which the children particularly enjoy. There are large wooded and wildlife areas around the school to support the recreational needs of developing children. Several of the children attend local scout and cub groups and others attend sporting clubs locally.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The school has a 'Special Person' system where an identified member of the care staff acts as a child's key worker and will ascertain a child's feelings about their life at the school. A School Council meeting is held every half term. This is chaired by a pupil and is attended by pupil representatives of each class who consult their peers about issues that they wish to be raised at these meetings. There was evidence seen that issues raised at previous meetings have been acted upon by the school. There is an array of forums available, both formal and informal, where children are encouraged to express their views about their day to day living and the running of the school. Children may also make their feelings known to the school's independent visitor who visits the school on a regular basis. There is also a school counsellor with whom children can discuss any areas of concern. The contact details of external agencies and support lines for young people are displayed around the school. This range of provision ensures that children have good opportunities to comment upon and make changes to the way the school is run.

The school has a children's guide which provides a range of information about the school. This is written in a user friendly format. A recommendation has been made earlier in this report that the guide should contain information with regard to making complaints directly to Ofsted. Children may be initially placed at the school on a provisional trial basis. Children leaving the school are given a memory folder which contains photographs and their records of achievements. Since the time of the last inspection the school has introduced a life skills element to the curriculum. Each child has a clearly written, comprehensive and up to date case file which identifies their assessed needs and the way that these will be met. These plans are appropriately reviewed. Children are able to communicate with their parents who make calls to the school via the private telephone booths, or wireless phones, or by using the school's email system. The school maintains regular contact with parents by daily or weekly telephone, or email contact or written weekly reports. Parents and carers complete a home diary which informs the school about events occurring whilst a child is on home leave.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Children must wear school uniform during the school day which is provided by the school but they change into their 'civvies' at the end of the school day and weekends. All children's clothing is laundered by the school and children were seen to be wearing appropriate clothing suitable for their age range.

The school holds money given by parents to cover a weekly, aged related pocket money scale. The school will ensure that all children will receive the same amount of weekly pocket money regardless of whether or not their parents are financially able

to provide this. This money is administered by the school and recorded in an effective and appropriate manner.

All of the sleeping and living areas throughout the residential provision are purpose built and are of a high standard of cleanliness, décor and furnishing. Children are able to personalise their bedrooms with their personal effects. The majority of bedrooms are single and en suite. For those sharing bedrooms there are an ample number of bathrooms and toilets. Children are given privacy when changing and bathing. Good relationships were observed between staff and children which seemed to convey a mutual respect. Care staff always knock before entering bedrooms. The school provides children with toiletries although parents may furnish their children with toiletries according to their own personal tastes. There are an abundance of toys and recreational and educational facilities available to the children.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity within the school is outstanding. This is evidenced by its clearly written equal opportunities, racial awareness and disability policies. The PSHE programme includes giving children the opportunity to understand and respect racial and gender differences; the school keeps a record of any incidents of racism. The school's practice in addressing issues of special needs amongst the young people it cares for and the way it trains its staff to understand children's needs further evidences commitment to meeting the individual and diverse needs of children. For example, staff have attended training in Autism and Asperger's Spectrum Disorder; all staff, including domestic staff, have been trained in basic sign language. The school has an annual 'International Day' and a 'Friendship Day' to promote children's respect of other cultures and nationalities; the menu plan actively promotes international cuisine and there are positive images of diversity groups displayed throughout the school.

The school has a clearly written and comprehensive Statement of Purpose which spells out the aims and objectives of the school. There is a children's guide which gives each child a good range of information about the school. The schools policies and procedures are comprehensive and clearly written and are available to all staff and stakeholders. There are clearly written and up to date records of individual children's needs and their developmental progress contained within their case files.

The single central record of staff vetting and recruitment checks show that the school is rigorous in that regard. Over 80% of the care staff have the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 in Child Care and staff are encouraged and supported in undertaking further professional awards. All care staff receive one to one supervision at least every half term. A comprehensive staff induction checklist is in place for all newly appointed staff. All staff undergo an annual professional development review that looks at their training and developmental needs. Staff have access to a range of training opportunities that ensure that they have the key skills required to look after the needs of the children that they care for. The head of care

has many years experience in child care, they have a professional social work qualification and are registered with the General Social Care Council. This high level of training and professional qualification provides children with a good level of care from suitably qualified and trained people.

The school is subject to regular monitoring visits from members of the governing body and written reports are made to identify areas of necessary internal development. The headteacher conducts regular monitoring reviews of different areas of service provision within the school and submits frequent reports to the board of governors. The school does not produce an overall annual review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for boarding pupils.

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 the children's guide tells children how they can make a complaint directly to Ofsted NMS 4.8
- ensure that an annual written review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for boarding pupils is produced and presented to the governing body. NMS 32.4