

Springfield House School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

Unique reference number	SC042411
Inspection date	10/02/2011
Inspector	Carole Moore
Type of inspection	Key

Setting address	Springfield House School, Kenilworth Road, Knowle, Solihull, West Midlands, B93 0AJ
Telephone number	01564 772772
Email	janet.collins@spfldhs.bham.sch.uk
Registered person	Birmingham City Council
Head/ Principal	Janet Collins
Nominated person	Janet Collins
Date of last inspection	21/10/2009

© Crown copyright 2011

Website: 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

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

Springfield House School is a Birmingham City Council Community Special School for pupils aged four to 11 with a range of special educational needs. The majority have social, emotional or behavioural difficulties; some have learning difficulties and some are diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorders. The school can accommodate 63 pupils and is open on weekdays and term time only.

The school is situated in a rural position near Knowle, Solihull and can accommodate children in the Lodge up to four nights a week. The residential provision can be a flexible arrangement based on an assessment of children's overall needs.

The purpose of Springfield House School is to provide a nurturing environment with firm boundaries in which children can rediscover their ability to learn and to enjoy and achieve.

Nine children were present throughout the inspection and contributed in part to its content.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This announced inspection focused on all the key national minimum standards for residential special schools. As with the previous annual inspection, the school continues to provide outstanding outcomes for children.

This is a school with exceptional strengths that meets all and exceeds the vast majority of the national minimum standards. Children receive excellent support to meet their individual needs from a range of staff who collaboratively work together in the best interests of each child. All employees of the school have a common aim with the children at the core of their thinking. The residential team is experienced, well established and provides very good quality care to the children. The staff group is small, so they know the needs of the children extremely well. They can also provide consistency and as a result the children make very good progress and enjoy their stay.

One recommendation has been raised that relates to the care and control policy but has a minimal impact on the overall outcomes for children.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection there were two recommendations, both of which have been achieved. Progress includes an even more robust recruitment procedure for all volunteers and there is a clear medication policy in place which includes practice for controlled drugs.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The children enjoy the food during their stay. They are encouraged to be healthy in their choices and individual needs and preferences are well provided for. All food is freshly cooked on the premises by staff who understand nutritional issues well and how these impact on individuals. All meals are cooked from scratch with fresh ingredients, including yoghurt and cakes, ensuring that optimum nutrition is established and maintained. Mealtimes are a very pleasant social occasion where conversation is encouraged and positive social behaviour promoted. The school has been awarded 'National Healthy School Status.' One child was keen to say, 'I am encouraged to eat salads and fruit and only have one sugar in my tea.'

The school delivers outstanding health care to its children, providing a 'team around the child' approach to their physical and emotional well-being. Individual needs are identified as part of the admission process to ensure that the school can suitably meet them. The multidisciplinary team can provide psychology, psychiatry, speech and language therapy, counselling, music therapy and medical support. The therapy team work from the school and therefore can be integrated into the whole school staff team. However, due to budget constraints the therapists have fewer hours within the school but are using a variety of methods to ensure children still receive a quality service. Therapists work alongside care and education staff devising programmes of therapy to support children and their families. The therapists contribute to regular review meetings for each child and are able to respond to a crisis by observing behaviour and providing guidance on how to manage and support some complex needs. Staff report how valuable it is to have such a therapy team on site for guidance in their role of caring for, and supporting children.

Medicines are also safely managed. Staff are trained in the administration of medicines and specific training is provided to ensure that staff are fully competent in any particular medical procedures that the children require. Medical consent is actively sought from parents and a signed form is retained on file ensuring children receive preventative and emergency medical treatment without delay. There is now a much clearer policy on the administration of controlled drugs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled. The service has robust policies and procedures in relation to all aspects of ensuring safety which are effectively implemented in practice.

The complaints procedure is easily accessible to children and they are confident that any complaint would be taken seriously by staff. There are good relationships between the children and the staff, and an open culture encourages them to raise any issues they have freely. The complaints process and anti-bullying information are presented in the welcome pack. Children say they can easily talk to staff and they sort out worries. Parents also confirmed that they strongly agree that the school is easy to contact if they wish to raise any issues about their child.

The safety and welfare of the children have a very high priority in the school and they say they feel safe and comfortable during their stay. Each individual has their needs and risks identified in documents providing detailed, clear information to staff about how risks can be minimised as far as possible. These risk assessment documents work very well in practice and help to keep the children safe. Compatibility within group situations is well considered to ensure that the children are protected. The staff at all levels, including domestic and office staff, understand and are clear about what they should do if there is a safeguarding issue.

The school has an excellent process in place to clearly identify children that are causing concern. This generates a behaviour support and intervention plan and children have a 'getting it right' plan which helps the child understand the help they are to receive. This in turn delivers better outcomes for children.

The quality of relationships between staff and children is outstanding and reinforces the very caring atmosphere that can be witnessed throughout the school. This view is reinforced by a parent who states: 'My child is developing some much needed independence and social skills in a fun, safe home from home setting.' Children's needs and behaviour are well understood by the staff and they know what the 'triggers' are for more challenging behaviour for individuals. Staff have completed training and are competent in diffusing situations to try to avoid the use of physical intervention, which is rare and a last resort. There have been no physical interventions and very few sanctions used during residence since the last inspection. Staff are very effective and help children to control their impulsive behaviour and this is achieved by the use of a positive and achievable rewards scheme.

The head of care along with the site manager ensure that the building is safe for the children, staff and visitors. Fire drills have taken place regularly, as have tests on all fire equipment in the building in line with the requirements of the fire authority. Staff and children are very confident about what they should do should there be a fire. Inspection of the boilers and portable appliance testing are all up to date ensuring the safety of all who use the building.

Children continue to be protected by the school's robust recruitment system that ensures all staff including volunteers complete the necessary recruitment checks and are deemed suitable to work before commencement of employment. Proactive monitoring of visitors to the school takes place, to prevent children being exposed to unsuitable adults. This excellent practice truly safeguards their welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The residential experience provides the opportunity for children to develop personal and social skills. This helps them with their independence, their self-esteem and to form positive relationships with their peers and adults. A parent reported: 'My child enjoys the boarding experience, staff do a great job and help (my child) to build friendships outside of the classroom environment.' Each morning there is a meeting where teaching and care staff can share aspects of the child's previous day. There is a seamless approach across the school and the residential provision which provides a consistency and continuity of care which is outstanding.

A further strength of the school is the enjoyment and achievement of the children. There is an extensive range of activities which are appreciated and enjoyed by all. This gives children the opportunity to experience those activities which they may otherwise not have the opportunity to carry out and they feel the sense of achievement. The extensive grounds surrounding the school provide ample opportunity for play and exercise and include forest fun, bicycle rides, pond dipping, nature walks and many sporting activities.

Individual support is available from a variety of sources within the school to meet the children's special needs. Residential staff, teaching staff and therapists work together to provide the most appropriate support tailored to the individual. Staff spend time with children helping them in making progress towards their personal targets. The unit has some specialist resources to support key working such as board games, art and craft equipment, computers and interactive toys and games. The children report that they can talk to the residential staff about any difficulties they may be experiencing. In addition to the residential staff there is a nominated governor and an advocate who visit regularly and volunteers who provide an added dimension to activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are cared for well in residence by a small and established staff team who provide consistent good quality care on a day-to-day basis. This results in significant improvement to the welfare, behaviour and safety of individuals. Assessment and care planning inform staff about how to meet children's needs on a day-to-day basis. There are regular changes in the needs of individuals but the systems in place for

the exchange of new information are very good. Residence plans cover all aspects of the children's care with clear targets and outcomes that are well measured.

Children are supported when they move into residence and say that staff make them feel very welcome and try to settle them in, in a pleasant and supportive way. They receive a welcome pack which sets out the rules, how to complain and what to expect. The head of care also ensures that children are individually as prepared as they can be. Parents report a high level of satisfaction with communication from the school staff, being kept well informed, and that their child really enjoys the boarding experience. A designated member of staff acts as a parent liaison officer and plays a vital role in reassuring parents of any anxieties they may have.

Staff spend a lot of quality time with children and this helps to ensure that their views can be established. There are regular questionnaires sent home for children to complete with their family; these work well to establish their views about their stays in residence. There are also regular children's meetings and an active school council which meets regularly. The school has developed good links with parents and is successfully running parenting groups for those families that require that extra support.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The residential unit is a separate building to the school within the grounds. It provides a well-maintained homely environment with comfortable furnishings. The lounges provide sufficient space for the group, and additional play rooms are available for specific activities and individual time with an adult. Bedrooms are suitably furnished and children are encouraged to personalise their own space.

There are extensive grounds surrounding the school where a good range of activities can take place when weather permits.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school is organised and managed in a manner that delivers and maintains an outstanding level of care. The head of care provides good leadership and has the expertise, skills and knowledge to effectively manage a residential provision. The cohesion of the senior leadership team is a strength of the school with their determination to continually raise standards in the delivery of care and education to the children. There are enough staff on duty at all times to provide safe care and staff have opportunities to spend quality time with the children. Good arrangements are in place for senior cover on duty and access to senior management for advice and support when needed.

Children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in

safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare. Staff have great confidence in the people who manage them and managers value the staff. Professional supervision takes place and regular staff meetings involving all staff ensure consistency of approach and a professional working partnership. There is a clear training programme in place and all refresher mandatory training is managed by the deputy head.

Children and staff enjoy the stability of an efficiently run school. Systems for monitoring the operation of the residential school are excellent, and the school has an atmosphere of creative and focused direction with children's welfare clearly at the forefront. The board of governors play an active role in the monitoring of the residential unit, and the quality assurance function captures children's overall experiences and highlights any areas for improvement. These visits provide excellent additional safeguarding mechanisms for children by looking at staff and management practices.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding and the staff ensure that each child is seen as an individual and is treated as such. This is evidenced through different assemblies and school gatherings. Each child, whatever their needs, has equal access to the services that the residential service provides.

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 care and control policy details how staff are to be debriefed following any physical interventions. (NMS10.19)