

Pontville Residential School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Norma Welsby
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Date of last inspection	07/10/2009

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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 residential special school has been managed by the same organisation since April 2001. The school is located in a residential area on the outskirts of a busy market town and is set in its own grounds. A range of community facilities in the town are available within walking distance. The school provides day places and boarding for both boys and girls with social communication difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, including attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, Asperger's syndrome and epilepsy. The residential facility provides care from Monday to Friday afternoon during term time only.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This inspection was announced and took place over two days. Throughout the inspection period young people and staff were extensively consulted. Without exception all comments were positive and complimentary. Young people feel safe and well supported. Many feel that this school meets their needs extremely well. One young person, for example, expressed the following: "I think all the staff are a credit to the school. They are great listeners and always there when I need to talk to them. Carry on the good work. I love you all we are all a family. I just love coming to stay. I miss it when I am not here." Another comment received also summarises the views of many. "I feel safe in the unit the staff are supportive in the unit and the food is brill there is plenty of people to turn to if I feel unsafe."

The overwhelming impression this school conveys is of a staff team, under strong leadership, working extremely well together in the best interests of the young people. The teaching and care staff support and complement each other and work effectively to enable young people to benefit, as much as possible, from their time at the school. The residential provision enhances opportunities for young people by building their confidence, developing social participation and communication. This along with developing key skills helps to prepare young people for adulthood.

During this inspection some areas for further improvement were identified and three recommendations are included in this report. Senior staff responded very positively to the inspection feedback, demonstrating a clear commitment to further improving outcomes for young people.

Improvements since the last inspection

Two recommendations were made at the last inspection carried out in October 2009. Both of these recommendations have been satisfactorily addressed. One of the areas

raised related to the school obtaining all relevant information about a pupil before they are admitted, including who has parental responsibility. In response to this the school has redesigned the initial acceptance and information sheets for all pupils. The second recommendation referred to monitoring processes and to address this shortfall the school has implemented an independent monitoring system and revised the report format.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The service promotes healthy lifestyles to an outstanding standard.

Individual health care needs are fully assessed and kept under review. Detailed placement plans for each young person identify how their health needs will be met. Staff ensure young people access a range of health care professionals.

The service manages medication very well. Arrangements for the safe storage, administration and disposal of all medication are consistent with good practice. Some homely remedies are administered when required and while a record is maintained, the residential medication administration records do not provide a full chronology of all periodic medication, if given during school hours. Following assessment young people may have the opportunity to take responsibility for their own medication. Staff responsible for administering medication are appropriately trained and the school has recently put additional safety checks in place to monitor practices, ensuring young people's medication is appropriately managed. This supports the view that this service constantly seeks ways to develop its practices to protect young people and enhance outcomes.

Mealtimes are very positive and social occasions, both within school and the residential units. Menus offer a balanced and nutritious diet and there is good liaison between school and unit staff to ensure young people receive a varied diet throughout their day. The school has been awarded the Healthy School Status. Healthy eating is very much promoted and young people are offered an excellent choice of meals. Typical comments from young people include: "The meals are fantastic and we have lots of choice." Fresh fruit, juice and drinking water are readily available at all times.

Young people are regularly consulted about meals provided and in the residential units meals are flexibly arranged to meet the needs of young people. For example in respect of their particular likes and dislikes and also evening commitments such as sport activities. Care staff responsible for the preparation and cooking of the evening meal have had appropriate training. They encourage young people to take an active interest and make a contribution to mealtimes. Older young people living in the semi-independent unit are actively supported to budget, prepare and cook their own evening meal. Some young people also have work experience in the school kitchen and this has proved particularly instrumental in gaining appropriate qualifications to enable young people to secure future employment.

All young people are encouraged to live a healthy lifestyle and to include exercise in their daily lives. Staff are very effective in helping young people to make informed choices and to develop increasing awareness and responsibility for their own health and wellbeing.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The service has excellent policies and procedures in place to promote the safety and well-being of young people. Staff are thorough and competent in their practices, providing a safe and nurturing experience for young people who board.

Staff respect young people's privacy. A good balance is maintained between promoting privacy and the need to ensure young people receive adequate supervision. Staff are aware of the school's confidentiality policy and information is treated and stored appropriately.

There is an established and comprehensive complaint procedure in place. Information is on display and young people know how to make a complaint. Staff are very open to listening to concerns and comments expressed by young people. Records demonstrate that concerns are taken seriously and responded to quickly and effectively. Young people confirm that they feel confident in raising any concerns they might have with staff and that these will be treated seriously.

There is a clear procedure in place for responding to child protection concerns and the school has established good links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Within the service there are four designated child protection officers who have up-to-date child protection training and all other staff receive induction and refresher training in child protection.

A policy to counter bullying is also in place and young people are aware that bullying is not acceptable. Discussions with staff confirm that incidents of bullying are rare. This is due to the good levels of staff supervision and the respect that all young people are encouraged to have for each other. Issues relating to cyber bullying and internet safety are addressed appropriately.

The whole school works together effectively to promote socially acceptable behaviour. Young people's needs are thoroughly assessed on admission and this remains ongoing as young people settle in and their behaviours change. Some young people have a behaviour management plan and a behaviour management contract. These contain clear strategies for responding to different behaviours and are devised in consultation with young people and their parents or carers. Young people are also engaged in an incentive scheme that enables them to earn additional money each week.

All staff are trained in the use of physical intervention techniques and receive

refresher training on an annual basis. Physical intervention is used infrequently and minimal holds are undertaken to keep young people and others safe. Staff record information on a database that identifies key information about behaviours and this information is being used to better inform staff so they can implement more effective strategies to manage behaviour even more positively. The ethos of mutual respect that exists between staff and young people is an outstanding feature of this service and staff are rightly proud that there has been a consistent reduction in the number of physical interventions during recent years.

All records relating to physical interventions and sanctions are satisfactory. However information is not always detailed and there is a repetitive use of some sanctions. In addition the sanction book does not list permitted sanctions, although these are known to staff.

There are continual improvements made to the physical environment to improve comfort and safety for young people. There are risk assessments for all aspects of safety of the premises and grounds along with young people's behaviours and activities. Fire safety matters receive good attention and there is an effective system for ensuring all electrical and gas appliances are regularly checked and serviced.

The vetting of visitors is very comprehensive. Staff recruitment procedures are also very thorough. This supports the view that young people are cared for by staff who are deemed suitable to work with young people and who are appropriately trained and experienced to keep young people safe.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are supported to develop skills and confidence in a range of social, domestic and educational situations. Staff are highly motivated and committed to enable young people to reach their personal targets. The excellent relationships that exists between young people and staff across the school and residential service results in highly effective and individualised care.

Staff across the school and residential service work extremely well together in the best interests of every young person. Residential staff make significant contributions to each young person's educational progress by supporting teaching with practical experience, homework support and confidence building. For example through the support of residential staff, young people are engaged in achieving a wide range of assessment and qualification awards, (AQA). These accredited qualifications are enabling young people to achieve skills in many areas. This is improving their confidence and preparing young people for adulthood.

All young people have an individual placement plan that sets out their assessed needs and how these will be met. Key workers have primary responsibility for the implementation of the care plan, but staff also work very effectively as a team. Young people have many opportunities to participate in a wide range of purposeful

and enjoyable activities, such as domestic tasks, sport and drama, both within the setting and in the local community. These opportunities have led to significant individual personal development.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are very committed to providing young people with opportunities to make a positive contribution. Young people are encouraged to be involved in decision making both about their daily lives and also in the development and running of the school, including the residential service.

Very positive relationships exist between staff and young people that are based on mutual respect and open communication. This is an outstanding feature of the service. This view was confirmed during extensive observations and through discussions with young people and staff.

Staff encourage and support young people to maintain contact with their parents, carers or other family members. They can keep in touch via telephone during their stay and parents can also visit after school if they wish and can enjoy a meal which young people will have helped to prepare. Staff support parents well and work hard to maintain positive relations and open communication. They have excellent insight into the differing needs and wishes of parents.

Every young person has an individual care plan. Young people are fully involved in drawing up their plan, contribute to setting their own targets and are involved in reviews. Parents are also consulted and involved in all aspects of their child's care. Each young person has an allocated key worker who regularly meets with them to discuss matters affecting both their daily lives and future plans. Young people remain at the centre of service's activity and they are given every opportunity to be involved and their individuality is well recognised and respected.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The residential living areas provide a comfortable and safe environment. Arrangements are in place to support older young people in their preparations for leaving school. For example staff assist young people in acquiring an appropriate range of skills such as using public transport, budgeting, shopping and benefitting from work experience.

All young people receive assistance and support to plan for their future and when they will leave school. External agencies, social workers and families all work with the school and young person to plan and prepare for transition and adulthood.

The residential provision is comprised of two units. Both units are comfortable and

homely and are domestically equipped. Young people feel safe and relaxed in these areas. All have a single bedroom which they can lock and each are highly personalised. One of the units is used by young people who are preparing for independence. Staff carefully assess young people to ensure that compatibility is properly considered prior to a young person being allocated to a specific unit. The benefits of this is apparent in how well young people interact with each other.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The residential service within this special school is very well managed. The head of care is very experienced and the staff team work exceptionally well together. The management ethos is open, inclusive and progressive. Without exception young people are very complimentary about the way the service is managed.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Staff are very knowledgeable about the needs and aspirations of the young people who use the service. The staff team provide positive role models and demonstrate exceptional commitment to providing young people with a safe, nurturing and positive experience. Staff work effectively with young people to establish good values such as respect and tolerance. Young people benefit from their residential experience as it improves their confidence, skills and participation. Evidence supports the service's commitment to further improving equality and diversity in practice to enhance outcomes for young people.

The residential staff comprises a head of care with a team leader and team of support workers deployed in each unit. This staffing structure works very well and provides clear lines of accountability. Staff are routinely deployed to work in a specific unit with the same young people. This provides a very good level of continuity which works well. Staffing levels are very good. While the service struggles to provide a mixed gender of staffing on each shift, there is a good range of ages and backgrounds among the staff team.

One hundred percent of the staff team have achieved National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3, which is commendable. The head of care also holds NVQ level 3 and a qualification in leadership and management but has not yet secured a level 4 or equivalent qualification. All staff benefit from a rolling programme of refresher training in mandatory areas, such as child protection and behaviour management. Staff also participate in regular joint training with teaching staff and are able to access other training relevant to their own role and responsibilities. The arrangements for staff training throughout the school is very well managed and recorded. Staff confirm that they feel very well supported in their role within the service and enjoy being part of a highly motivated and enthusiastic team. Regular supervision, team meetings and annual appraisal are also in place.

The service benefits from regular monitoring processes. These reports help to focus on areas of development and where action is needed to address shortfalls. Improved

consultation with young people during such visits is being developed. The head of care also undertakes a quality monitoring review each half term. This report does not provide enough information to demonstrate that all areas listed under the required standard have been thoroughly monitored, signed and appropriate action taken to address any shortfalls.

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 a complete record is kept of all medication given to young people, including homely remedies, ensuring this record is kept in such a way that residential staff are fully aware of any medication taken within school hours (NMS 14.20)
- ensure a detailed record of all sanctions applied is kept in a bound and numbered book which contains a list of permitted sanctions and that these records are monitored and signed each half term (NMS 10.9 and NMS 32.2)
- ensure that the head of care achieves either NVQ level 4 or another qualification which demonstrates competencies at the same level (NMS 31.2)
- ensure all records as detailed under National Minimum Standard 32.2 are monitored and signed to identify any patterns or issues requiring action (NMS 32.2).