

Northeast Manor School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

Unique reference number	SC050107
Inspection date	23/03/2011
Inspector	Angela Hunt
Type of inspection	Key

Setting address	Northeast Manor School, Newhaven Road, Rodmell, LEWES, East Sussex, BN7 3EY
Telephone number	01273 472915
Email	office@northeast.co.uk
Registered person	Northeast Manor School
Head/ Principal	Carmen Harvey-Browne
Nominated person	Carmen Harvey-Browne
Date of last inspection	19/01/2010

© 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

Northease Manor is an independent co-educational special school for pupils aged between 10 and 17. The school offers education and boarding provision for able and potentially able pupils who have a range of specific learning difficulties including dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit disorder, dyscalculia, and social and communication difficulties. Currently there are 96 pupils who attend the school of which 45 are boarders; boarding is provided on a weekly basis only. The school is situated near Lewes in East Sussex and is contained within its own grounds in a beautiful rural setting. Many of the buildings date from the Tudor period, with newer structures being constructed to complement the overall ambience of the school. The main boarding facilities are provided in four separate parts of the school. Since the last inspection a further boarding house has been opened. This is situated opposite the entrance to the main school. Boys and girls are accommodated in separate accommodation.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This is a good service with some outstanding features. Boarders' welfare is enhanced by the effective relationships which exist between staff and boarders. The house staff are keen to develop their skills and take on more responsibility as their experience and knowledge of working in the boarding houses increase. The care staff work well together as a team and demonstrate determination and dedication to promote positive outcomes for the young people in their care. The changes made by the leadership during the past year have yielded some encouraging results and are indicative of a commitment to improve the quality of service offered. The health care arrangements are excellent and contribute to promoting the health and well-being of young people. The quality and overall standard of record keeping is good. Young people feel safe and appropriate child protection training or briefing has been undertaken by relevant staff. Some good work has taken place to enhance safety. This has included reviewing some of the systems in place and arranging for an external body to conduct a comprehensive fire risk assessment. A detailed action plan is in place and some work has already been undertaken. However, more work is needed to fully implement all the findings of the risk assessment. Also, work to address the safe operation and maintenance of hot and cold water systems is needed. While the necessary employment checks for safeguarding pupils have been undertaken, a more robust approach to checking gaps in employment is necessary.

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous inspection of the residential provision identified three recommendations. The school was asked to: consider expanding the medication policy relating to the administering and storing of medicines; make improvements to the furnishing and décor of accommodation; and consider implementing a more robust system for the monitoring of care. The school has done some good work on reviewing their medication policy and practice. This helps to better promote boarders' health and general well-being. Attention has been given to decorating parts of the boarding accommodation. This has included painting some bedrooms, the upgrade of some communal areas and the removal of strip lighting in hallways. This has resulted in an enhanced appearance of the boarding accommodation. More robust systems have been introduced to monitor the quality of record keeping. In some cases the format and place where records are located has been reviewed. The outcome of this is the centralisation of some records and a more consistent approach to the way in which records are kept.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Essential arrangements to meet young people's health care needs are in place. Young people have access to a well organised medical room which is staffed during the day by a designated member of staff. This member of staff is the school's welfare officer who has overall responsibility for the welfare of pupils during the school day. At the end of the day appropriate arrangements take place for the hand over of the administration of medication from the welfare officer to boarding house staff. Effective communication between the school's welfare officer and house staff ensure young people's health care needs continue to be well met outside of the school day and help to promote continuity of care.

Up-to-date health information is maintained and records are securely kept. Staff training and experience combined with effective communication with parents and the appropriate link with a local surgery, ensure that the health needs of young people are identified and suitably met. The highly effective system in place for the receipt, administration and storage and disposal of medicines mean that there are safe routines in place. The lucidity and detail of recording information about an individual's medication, health care and welfare matters are consistent with good practice.

The recent centralisation of accident forms promote uniformity and enable a more efficient way of monitoring any trends or patterns. It also helps in making sure that an overview is maintained from a health and safety perspective. In addition, any necessary remedial action is taken promptly to minimise risks where appropriate. This means that young people receive high quality first aid and medical care when required.

Young people benefit from healthy and nutritious meals that afford choice and meet

individual dietary needs. Some work has been undertaken to promote healthy eating through the introduction of more fruit and healthier options. The school plans to continue to do more work on promoting healthy eating. This includes opportunities for achieving a national benchmark with regard to being healthy. With the exception of one particular year group, the general consensus from the surveys returned from young people is that they are happy with the food offered and that they get enough to eat.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people say that they feel safe and well looked after. They state that staff are friendly and approachable and indicated that their lives had improved by coming to the school. Young people are clear about what to do should they have a concern or worry. Systems for the recruitment and selection of staff support good practice and help to keep young people safe. There are, however, shortfalls in that a more robust approach is needed in relation to checking gaps in employment.

Staff deliver a successful behaviour management model in which good behaviour is given positive attention and sanctions where needed are transparent and clear. The young people spoken to during the inspection indicated that generally they felt that sanctions for inappropriate behaviour were apparent and fair. A system of mentoring is in place to nurture individual pupils who may benefit from additional support with their behavioural difficulties. Obvious structures, clear expectations, as well as additional support mean that there is consistency of approach in managing behaviour. This results in a generally calm atmosphere throughout the school and a sense of mutual respect between pupils and staff.

The school's main designated child protection officer has a good knowledge of the safeguarding responsibilities commensurate to their role. An appropriate level of child protection training has been undertaken by the school's designated persons and by staff who work in the boarding houses. Adequate systems have been introduced by the head of boarding to deal with all child protection matters and any allegations. For example, staff know what to do in the event of an allegation or suspicion of abuse. A script for child protection training has been introduced as a reminder to those who have previously undertaken relevant training. Also, to support anyone who has not currently undertaken formal child protection training. While there are appropriate systems, the record keeping of any child protection matters could be improved to better replicate the practice in place and to support the good work undertaken. The structures in place in the school help to protect boarders and keep them safe.

The policy for bullying is appropriate. The school does not tolerate bullying and young people confirm that they do not identify bullying as a problem at the school. Guidance to counter bullying is available and observant monitoring minimises the opportunity for bullying to arise among pupils.

Regular boarder forum meetings mean that young people can express their views

and ideas for change. Residential pupils who are representatives of this group indicated that they take this responsibility seriously and that some changes have resulted from the suggestions they have made. Minutes are prominently displayed on house notice board. These minutes indicate the items raised and outcomes, including explanations where some aspects cannot be progressed.

Robust health and safety practice exists to protect young people. This includes: regular fire drills; risk assessments on activities; regular testing of emergency lighting and fire exits; appropriate testing of fire fighting equipment; and the recent completion of a comprehensive fire risk assessment. While some work has already been undertaken in response to the outcome of the fire risk assessment, more work is however needed to fully implement all the findings of the risk assessment. Work is still required to ensure the safe operation and maintenance of hot and cold water systems.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The school demonstrates sensitivity to the needs of individuals. Young people talk extremely positively about the contact they have with pastoral care staff. Residential pupils are well supported and house staff play an important role in monitoring organised prep. A tutor system makes certain that each young person has an allocated member of staff. There is also a range of people whom pupils can go to if they have any personal or welfare concerns. This includes access to counsellors. Young people say that staff are easily accessible and approachable should they need advice or help. Young people benefit from the care provided by enthusiastic and caring house staff who know them well and care about how they are doing. Specialist services such as speech and language therapy and access to occupational therapists is available through an external provision. This supports young people engaging as independently as possible in activities which enhance their health and general well-being.

Young people's independence is promoted and they are encouraged to make choices and express their ideas. Mechanisms in place for this include established tutor groups and regular boarder forum meetings. The new boarding house has well-serviced communal areas and kitchen facilities where pupils are able to undertake activities which promote their independence and help to prepare them for moving on. Individual case files include detailed information relating to young people's aims, their care needs and development with desired outcomes. This combined with the supportive and nurturing environment promote the well-being of pupils. Communication books and weekly house meetings ensure good interaction amongst house staff and mean that the needs of individuals are well known.

A range of appropriately staffed activities outside of the school day provides pupils with a choice as to what they want to do in their leisure time. For those activities which are more popular, appropriate arrangements are made to ensure equitable

access. The outdoor area is very pleasant and allows for the opportunity of active pursuits which young people enjoy.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

There is a very clear admission procedure in place which includes an assessment of need. Relevant welfare details are sought as a part of this. Care records clearly detail the young person's needs and how they can be met. Individual case files are well organised and securely kept to ensure confidentiality of information.

Young people are actively encouraged to express their ideas and opinions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run in a variety of ways. Opportunities available include boarding forums, a mentoring system for specific individuals, communication books, and regular meetings with tutors and house staff.

Communication logs guarantee an overview as to the specific needs of individuals. Contact with parents and carers during a young person's stay during the week is in no way restricted or compromised. Young people are provided with suitable times at the end of the school day in which to contact family and friends. This, combined with the support provided to parents, plays an important role in contributing to the progress individuals make. Excellent communication between the head of boarding and parents make sure that there is regular and ongoing dialogue to promote the economic well-being of young people. Effective lines of communication also exist between the head of boarding and staff working across the boarding houses. A parental survey sums this up by describing staff as excellent. Another parental survey describes the head of boarding as a positive addition to the school.

Encouraging relationships are in place between staff and boarders which are based on mutual respect. Boarding house staff recognise the situation young people are in and work hard to promote an environment of tolerance and understanding. Young people live in a highly supportive and nurturing environment which ensures that they are well cared for.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The boarding side of the school is organised according to year groups, with the intention of increasing personal independence and cooperation. There are four boarding houses, each with a designated member of staff living in. There is a girls' house, a house for Year 7 to 9 boys, a house for Year 10 boys and a house for Year 11 boys. The house for Year 11 boys is located opposite the main school entrance. This is a recent addition to the boarding provision and opened in September 2010. Due to the location of this house young people residing here are transported to and from the house to the school via minibus, so as to ensure their safety. Further plans are anticipated in the future with regard to the composition of boarding houses and

the deployment of boarding staff.

Boarding accommodation is in sound decorative order and is maintained to a high standard of cleanliness throughout. An ongoing maintenance programme combined with an effective way in which to highlight maintenance matters means that the boarding houses are particularly well maintained. While the location of the school has presented difficulties in arranging internet access in the boarding houses, a concerted effort has been made by the school in an effort to resolve this. Young people's bedrooms are personalised and there is suitable provision for them to store personal items and to keep them safe.

A range of communal areas exist across the four boarding houses. A degree of upgrade to common areas and the redecoration of some bedrooms have helped to create a more aesthetically pleasing boarding environment. Further work is planned to progress this further. The pleasant and clean environment demonstrates respect for young people and the appearance of the boarding houses helps to create a homely atmosphere.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Young people spoken to indicated that the school welcomes the varied diversity and differences in the school. Young people say that they are valued and respected as individuals and that they enjoy being a part of the school community. Discussions with staff, documentation examined and observations made, suggest that any forms of discrimination are acknowledged and dealt with appropriately by the school. Equality is promoted through the implementation of high quality support systems combined with staffs' understanding of young people's individual needs.

Ongoing monitoring of the school is conducted by governors through their regular visits to the school. These visits include checks on the school's records and dialogue with the head of boarding and other members of staff. While there have been a number of changes to governance in the past year, it is anticipated that several new governors shortly to be appointed will add value to the diversity and experience of current governing board members.

The leadership of boarding is good and is highly praised by young people, parents and all house staff. The school's monitoring systems which have been applied to good effect mean that management are clear about the schools' strengths and what needs to improve. Good routines are in place to effectively evaluate the quality of pastoral care. For example, the head of boarding regularly visits all boarding houses and a system of auditing the wide range of pastoral care records takes place.

While a written handbook for boarders has recently been developed, further work to update this and disseminate it throughout the boarding community is needed. Notwithstanding this, the head of boarding and leadership are available to parents

and carers in the event that they have a query or concern.

There are sufficient levels of staff to supervise young people. Appropriate arrangements are in place to oversee the less experienced boarding house staff or those who currently require supervision when undertaking tasks such as the management of medicines.

A system of induction, training and continuous professional development enables pastoral care staff to learn and develop within their roles. The boarding house staff team are keen and enthusiastic and demonstrate a commitment to improve outcomes for young people. The smooth operation of the boarding houses indicates good leadership and an understanding of the part individual house staff have to play.

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 all the findings of the recent fire risk assessment are implemented (national minimum standard 26.1)
- address the work needed to ensure the safe operation and maintenance of hot and cold water systems (national minimum standard 26.2)
- ensure a more robust approach to checking gaps in employment as part of the vetting of staff. (national minimum standard 27.2)