

# Lonsdale School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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<b>Inspector</b>	Jackie Callaghan
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<b>Registered person</b>	Hertfordshire County Council
<b>Head/ Principal</b>	Maria White
<b>Nominated person</b>	Maria White
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	28/01/2010

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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**

Lonsdale School was opened in 1971 as a purpose built school for pupils with physical and neurological impairments. There are 84 places with 26 residential places. The residential accommodation comprises of five self-contained units which can accommodate up to 26 pupils per night. The accommodation is shared by two groups of boarders each staying for two nights per week. There is a choice of single or shared bedrooms that can accommodate up to three pupils. All of the living and learning areas are at ground floor level. Living accommodation is arranged around gender and peer groups with each unit having its own kitchenette and living area as well as bedrooms, bathrooms and toilets. The school provides special fittings and adaptations to meet the needs of pupils. One of the flats is aimed at supporting young people to develop more independent living skills.

Residential pupils actively contributed to this report either through a questionnaire or in direct discussion with the inspector. There are currently 21 boys and 21 girls receiving a service.

### **Summary**

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was a full announced inspection that concentrated on the key national minimum standards. The overall judgement in this report is based on the standards inspected within the relevant Every Child Matters outcome groups. This inspection also considered the four recommendations made at the last inspection. Three of the recommendations have been fully met and one recommendation is to be repeated. The repeated recommendation is to ensure that staff supervision meets national minimum timescales. However, this is a minor shortfall that is not having a direct impact on the welfare of pupils.

The overall quality rating for this setting is good with many outstanding features. Pupils enjoy sleeping in the residential provision and benefit from clear, professional, effective and imaginative management. This coupled with a staff team who are skilled, knowledgeable and enthusiastic provides all pupils with stimulating and purposeful care. This was summed up by a pupil who said 'I look forward to coming to school to sleep. Staff are caring and are helping me develop skills that I will need for the future'.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

The last inspection highlighted four areas in need of development. Personal care is dealt with very sensitively and staff recognise that the privacy of pupils is of great

importance. All confidential and sensitive information is now locked away appropriately further promoting pupils' welfare. There is now a robust recruitment system in the school which maintains good levels of safety for pupils. Governing body monitoring visits now take place regularly and cover all the areas defined by national minimum standards. As a result, this provides further effective oversight that safeguards all pupils.

Staff state that they feel very well supported. However, staff are still not receiving formal supervision at the frequency required by national minimum standards.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Health promotion is a prominent feature at the school. The physical, emotional and mental health needs of each pupil are actively identified on admission and comprehensively supported throughout their school life. For example, excellent partnership working with speech and language and occupational health departments means the school provides holistic care for all pupils. One pupil confirmed this view as they stated 'I feel really cared for'.

The excellent partnership between residential staff and school staff means that pupils receive prolific personal, social and health education. As a result, pupils are enabled to make informed decisions regarding their diet, sexuality, health and exercise.

Pupils are provided with a nutritious, balanced and very appealing menus, taking into consideration their likes and dislikes. Pupils receive excellent messages about healthy eating. Mealtimes are a very pleasant and sociable occasion which unreservedly enhances the social development of all pupils.

There are very effective arrangements to ensure that medication is safely administered. Pupils' welfare is further promoted because residential staff are copiously supported by a nursing team that works at the school. This dynamic partnership successfully enables the school to meet the ever-changing and complex health care needs of pupils.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils using the service require varying levels of support and supervision from staff while carrying out personal care. Staff provide this in a way that maintains each pupil's privacy and dignity. Pupils are actively supported to raise issues or any concerns that they may have through an accessible complaints process. No complaints have been made since the last inspection.

The school has an anti-bullying policy and bullying is known by all to be unacceptable. Any issues are discussed openly ensuring pupils are protected. One

pupil said, 'yes I have seen bullying but staff spoke to them and sorted it out.' This demonstrates that issues are effectively addressed ensuring pupils are protected.

Staff take their responsibilities seriously for keeping the pupils safe. They receive annual child protection training and have substantial knowledge about safeguarding pupils' welfare. Pupils comments include, 'the staff are excellent and everyone is really kind and nice' and, 'sleeping at school is fun. I look forward to staying'. This shows that pupils feel valued and secure.

There are effective systems in place for protecting pupils who are absent from the school without permission. However, there has never been such an incident. Pupils are successfully encouraged and supported to behave in ways that will sustain them in the community once they have achieved independence. Staff are focused on providing behavioural boundaries that are fair, consistent and easily understood. As a result, pupils know what is expected of them and they proudly meet the challenge by eagerly displaying exemplary behaviour.

Pupils' health and safety is extensively protected. The school has thorough risk assessments for all aspects of the safety of the premises and grounds, which are implemented successfully in practice. The school operates a robust staff vetting procedure and staff demonstrate a proactive awareness of the need to safeguard pupils. Pupils are involved in the recruitment of all staff by taking an active part in the interview process. This not only empowers pupils to assert their rights but also gives them some ownership of who works with them.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils receive superb individual support when they need it. Considerable effort is put into combining social, education, care and health needs into one package. This not only meets individual identified needs but actively promotes development. Pupils are engaged by learning that develops and challenges them and excites their imagination. They are successfully empowered to be morally aware enabling them to distinguish between the principles of right and wrong. This assists pupils in enhancing self-concept values and emotional confidence.

The links between school and the residential provision are exceptionally strong. Residential staff are familiar with the educational needs and progress of pupils in their care. This ensures that pupils are effectively assisted to learn to be independent. Pupils are able to identify different staff that they can talk to for support. The school also ensures that there is an independent person available for pupils to access if they want to. Parents speak positively about the residential provision. Comments include; 'the residential team provide an enjoyable experience for my child where is he safe, well cared for, socialising and gaining independence skills. Most of all he is having fun' and, 'it is a very valuable well run part of school life and provides an excellent 24 hour curriculum'.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils are developing an evident awareness of others as they share and take turns, for example, at meal times. Pupils are imaginatively encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run. Staff demonstrate that they place great value on the views and opinions of the pupils and no pupil is assumed to be unable to communicate their views. As a result, the pupil's voice is a prominent feature that helps shape the care they receive.

Pupils experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes. This successfully paves the way for a smooth transition into residence. Pupils come in for tea visits to begin with, as a gradual introduction to residential living begins. Parents confirm that the admission process is exceptionally supportive.

Pupils actively contribute to their care plans. These plans are continually revisited during each school year giving a clear individual personal profile that complements their records of achievement. Consequently, plans continue to allow a better understanding of the pupil and their aspirations for the future. This view is confirmed by a parent who comments that, 'the opinions and views of pupils are actively sought and always taken into account'. This means pupils receive individualised and vibrant care.

In accordance with their wishes pupils are actively enabled and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families when sleeping at school. The school understands the value and importance of communication and contact with parents.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

The school has made a number of environmental adaptations, particularly in areas used for personal care. For instance, bathrooms have specialised baths and some rooms have ceiling hoists. The school's location, design, size and layout is in keeping with its Statement of Purpose. There have been many improvements made to the physical provision through re-decoration. However, it is acknowledged that school is looking very tired and dated. The school, however, is due to be re-housed in a brand new purpose built school in 2012. Until then pupils continue to be actively encouraged to personalise their bedrooms in order to make it feel more homely.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The management team provides very effective leadership for the staff group which means that pupils are receiving consistent care. The Statement of Purpose accurately describes what the school sets out to do for those pupils it accommodates. The

staffing policy ensures that the level of staffing is optimum in order to truly meet the school's Statement of Purpose. Consequently, pupils receive a flexible package of care by a skilful, committed and enthusiastic residential team.

The residential staff, like the rest of the school staff, benefit from empowerment and ownership at all levels. This means that pupils experience a consistent approach that is personalised to meet their exclusive needs. Staff are well trained and benefit from regular staff meetings. However, staff's support processes are potentially weakened because they are not receiving regular half-termly supervision. All staff either have or are working towards the required qualifications such as the National Vocational Qualification in Care at level 3.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The aim, which is successful in practice, is to treat all people within the school community and beyond equally. The headteacher and all staff have a central belief that being able to respect diversity is a core skill which all staff at the school have. As a result, the residential provision successfully promotes the pupils' positive awareness of gender and diversity both within the school and the wider community.

There are effective procedures for monitoring the operation of the residential provision. There is a well-focused school development plan in place, which accurately prioritises actions and provides criteria for success. It has improved the quality of the planning; incorporating more detail and adaptation to pupils needs and invested significantly in the professional development of staff. This has resulted in a workforce more equipped to meet the needs of the current residential population.

## **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 staff receive formal supervision at the frequency outlined in the national minimum standard. (NMS 30)