



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

Heathlands School

**Heathlands Drive
St Albans
Hertfordshire
AL3 5AY**

Lead Inspector
Mr Tom Cooper

Announced Inspection
27th February 2006 10:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Residential Special Schools*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained 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

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life.

Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above.

SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of school	Heathlands School
Address	Heathlands Drive St Albans Hertfordshire AL3 5AY
Telephone number	01727 754060
Fax number	01727 754064
Email address	admin.heathlands@thegrid.org.uk
Provider Web address	
Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school	Hertfordshire County Council
Name of Head	Ms M G Davis
Name of Head of Care	Mr Frank Harding
Age range of residential pupils	
Date of last welfare inspection	30/11/04

Brief Description of the School:

Heathlands School and its residential wing, Heath House, were purpose built in 1975, originally designed to accommodate primary age hearing-impaired children in need of Total Communication. The school, located half a mile from the centre of St. Albans, has been extensively modernised and has excellent resources including a thriving nursery and specialist rooms for audiology, speech and language therapy and sign language training.

Heath House is a two-storey building that offers single or shared study bedrooms spread over four wings. Bedroom groupings are segregated by age and gender. The facility is also well served with communal areas and there is access to the main school library after school hours.

SUMMARY

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

This announced inspection, the fourth conducted under section 87C(1) of the Children Act 1989 as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, took place on a weekday during the morning, afternoon and evening. In recognition of the high calibre of boarding welfare found at all previous inspections the Commission decided to adopt a 'lighter touch' approach, concentrating on verifying and updating the information provided on the Head Teacher's self-assessment form forwarded to the CSCI prior to the inspection, as well as holding discussions with the Head, Head of Care, Deputy Head of Care, numerous boarders and a School Governor who visited the premises on the afternoon of the inspection. Dinner was taken with the children and staff in the dining room and the inspector observed part of a meeting of boarders and staff, chaired by the Deputy Head of Care. A limited tour of the premises was conducted.

The inspection confirmed that Heath House continues to provide a very high standard of care for the boarders, who all appeared happy, stimulated and secure. Staff are very well supported by senior colleagues in order to achieve the school's aim of encouraging children to reach their full potential within a sensible risk assessment framework. The children are treated with dignity and respect and clearly enjoy a good quality of life.

What the school does well:

The school provides a safe and secure environment where each child is treated as a whole person and enabled to enjoy the full range of experiences, within his or her individual capabilities, to which other young people would have access. To this end, the school has developed a full range of well-crafted policies and procedures that are regularly reviewed and updated. These ensure that staff act consistently in accordance with the school's aim to integrate education, care and therapy thereby helping pupils achieve personal development, increased confidence and self-esteem.

The admissions procedure and care planning process are excellent. New boarders are given a copy of the Children's Guide to Heath House. Individual care plans are drawn up with the active involvement of the children, detailing their assessed needs and how they are to be met. Individual progress is recorded weekly. Each child has access to his or her personal file.

The children spoken with during the inspection all said they really liked boarding at the school, praising the community spirit, the close company of friends and the variety of stimulating social, recreational and educational experiences available. They also praised the food provided, although there was

evidently some desire for more healthy eating options on the menu. They expressed confidence in the integrity and caring approach of staff (and there was obvious positive interaction between staff and children). They felt that staff listened to them. An 'independent listener' is also available once a week. This open approach is reinforced the weekly children's meetings, the complaints procedure, the suggestion boxes and the anti-bullying initiatives, for example the measures taken to prevent 'cyber-bullying' by restricting the use of camera mobile telephones.

The school has a constructive approach to behaviour management based on rewarding positive behaviour and consistent application of the rules of Heath House by staff, which are discussed and agreed with the children annually. Senior staff monitor the records of any sanctions imposed in accordance with the agreed rules. All the children interviewed said they felt the rules were fair.

The children have good access to educational and leisure resources including the library, computers and the internet (subject to security and safety measures to protect them). Teaching staff support for homework is provided.

Staff clearly have good knowledge of the particular circumstances and needs of each child. These are documented in care plans agreed and drawn up after completion of a half term induction period. The children are involved in the review and updating process for their care plans. Every child is encouraged to develop greater independence.

Heath House is well appointed and decorated appropriately, with a rolling programme of redecoration and maintenance ensuring a comfortable and safe environment for the children. The premises have adaptations for the Deaf such as visible fire alarms. There are designated study areas and a good variety of communal spaces. There is a large plasma television that facilitates reading subtitles. The head reported that new garden furniture and a gas barbeque had been purchased for use in the summer months. Staff are vigilant regarding the security of the premises, in accordance with the recently reviewed relevant procedures and risk assessment.

Staffing levels by day and night are sufficient to provide the care and attention the children need. This has been bolstered since the last inspection by the creation of an in-house bank of relief staff (see below). The school has rigorous recruitment, induction and training policies and procedures that ensure all members of staff are suitable and competent to work with the children. All staff including volunteers are subject to CRB checks, undertake NVQ3 qualifications in Caring for Children and Young People and receive regular formal supervision. Other relevant training includes child protection, risk assessment, challenging behaviour etc in line with individual staff training profiles that identify particular needs. Staff asked said they felt well supported and rated teamwork and communications at Heath House as good. These strengths are maintained by means of daily handover meetings and weekly team meetings. All staff are expected to be able to use sign language and appropriate training is provided.

There is a high level of support and monitoring by the School Governors, who visit unannounced twice per term, monitor the incident/sanction book and produce reports on the conduct of the school for the governing board.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The statement of purpose was reviewed and updated in October 2005. The school has set up its own website to facilitate the sharing of information with parents.

The school has made great efforts to incorporate the five outcomes of Every Child Matters into practice and has produced documentary evidence of the initiatives taken to achieve this and improve the dialogue between staff and children. The head reported that the children had said they felt safer in the school as a result of this. The positive behaviour reward system for primary-age children has been reviewed and updated.

The Head of Care has attended designated teacher child protection training and has commenced the NVQ4 course. All residential support workers have received NSPCC child protection training. Other training has been provided including refresher training in positive behaviour management and homework support.

The bullying risk assessment has been reviewed, staff anti-bullying training has been renewed and measures taken to prevent 'cyber bullying' by restricting the use of camera mobile telephones on the premises.

Notifications of untoward events (required to meet standard7) are now more clearly summarised. The 'missing child' procedure has been expanded.

The premises Security Risk Assessment has been reviewed. The longstanding problems with the central heating system have been resolved and the heating is now working well. New equipment has been purchased, including an interactive whiteboard and data projector and new tablecloths for the dining room. The children also designed their own place mats to help make mealtimes a more positive experience.

Staffing at Heath House has been improved with the recent recruitment of a Deputy Head of Care. Another most positive development is that the school has acted to create its own bank of relief staff, to improve staff cover for absence through sickness and annual leave.

The School Governors now make monitoring visits unannounced.

What they could do better:

As found at previous inspections, little needs to be done to improve the current standard of residential care. All parties consulted commented favourably on the operation of the school and the experience of boarding and much evidence is available that demonstrates the high standards that staff and pupils continue to achieve. Nevertheless, as part of the school's self-assessment process the Head Teacher has identified and planned for some areas for improvement as listed below. These proposals are supported by the CSCI although no formal recommendations have been made in the report.

A "Welcome to Heath House" video made by the children is to be considered.

Child-friendly versions of key policies should be developed, for example covering confidentiality, privacy and search.

A reward system for secondary-age children should be introduced to promote the concept of positive reinforcement of good behaviour and achievement (this had just been started at the time of the inspection).

More individual activities in the community that require regular commitment should be developed. More computers should be obtained for the children to use in-house.

There should be more regular contact with parents of secondary-age children.

Scheduled refurbishment and redecoration work delayed by the heating repair work in 2005 should be carried out in 2006. External lighting over the pathway and at the fire assembly point should be provided. The installation of closed circuit television is being considered.

More minibus drivers should be identified and licensed to facilitate outings.

A critical incident plan should be devised, especially in the light of the recent Buncefield Depot explosion that occurred only a few miles away from the school. The Head Teacher reported that this would be considered in planning for the whole school.

Please contact the Head for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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Being Healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted.(NMS 14)
- Children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs.(NMS 15)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

14, 15

The school actively promotes the health care of each child and individual needs are documented in care plans. This promotes the physical and emotional well being of the children.

The children are provided with nutritious and well balanced meals that conform to individual dietary requirements and help the children to enjoy mealtimes. Some children would like more healthy eating options.

EVIDENCE:

The home has detailed policies regarding the intimate care of children and these are covered during the induction of all RSW staff. Currently, care staff are rarely called upon to meet any intimate needs. Staff monitor the children's emotional and physical needs and act in accordance with the documented care plan (the care plan format includes a health section). There are specific plans and protocols for emergency procedures. The school has a health education programme that residential staff promote as appropriate. Staff receive first aid training and will assist with or oversee the use of prescribed medication (there is a drugs cupboard on-site and children also have lockable facilities). All medication received into Heath House is recorded. Issues of personal hygiene are dealt with sensitively. Parents normally deal with routine medical, optical and dental appointments, although a number of children are registered with a local GP on a 'visitor' basis. Staff will accompany a child to an appointment if appropriate. Children have an annual medical examination as part of their statement of educational needs.

The inspector joined the boarders for dinner and was able to confirm at first hand that the meal provided was both nutritious and tasty. The school has recently reviewed the menus in consultation with the pupils. All the children asked said that the food was generally good with some commenting that they now have more healthy eating options available. All main meals are taken in the dining room with varying age groups seated at specific tables. The

atmosphere on the evening of the inspection was lively and fun with much interaction between the boarders and staff. Any cultural or dietary requirements are catered for such as vegetarian meals. Dining rooms and their furnishings are suitable for the needs of pupil using them. There is a domestic scale kitchen in Heath House and most of the secondary aged boarders make their own breakfasts. Primary-age pupils were currently helping with the preparation of evening meals.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled.(NMS 3)
- Children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration.(NMS 4)
- The welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse.(NMS 5)
- Children are protected from bullying by others.(NMS 6)
- All significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified by the Head of the school or designated person to the appropriate authorities.(NMS 7)
- Children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return.(NMS 8)
- Children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour.(NMS 10)
- Children live in schools that provide physical safety and security.(NMS 26)
- There is careful selection and vetting of all staff, volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers.(NMS 27)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 26 & 27

Children's privacy and confidentiality are promoted and respected. The school has a good complaints procedure that is well publicised. The school's policies on child protection and ongoing training of staff ensure that children are protected from abuse and any allegation or suspicion would be investigated appropriately. Similarly, staff act in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy that is regularly reviewed to ensure it remains relevant to current conditions.

The school has suitable procedures to follow when a child goes absent without authority.

Staff follow agreed procedures to encourage and reward good behaviour and respond constructively and proportionately to inappropriate behaviour.

The school provides a high standard of physical safety and security.

The school operates rigorous recruitment procedures. Staff are vetted prior to commencing work and all appropriate information is held on file to demonstrate their fitness to work at the school.

EVIDENCE:

The school has policies available for guidance on the subjects of privacy, confidentiality and gender-related issues. Some boarders are on full care orders and appropriate information is available to staff. All personal files in Heath House are kept locked in a steel cabinet. Most children have their own mobile telephones and there is a textphone available (although the office telephone could be made available should total privacy be needed). Children also can use the facsimile, e-mail and videophone facilities as required. Parents and other appropriate visitors can meet privately with individuals. Children interviewed said they were happy with the level of privacy afforded.

The formal complaints procedure (that encourages parents and others to address complaints to the Head Teacher or any member of the governing body) is outlined in the school's Prospectus, and Statement of Purpose. The procedure is also covered during the staff induction programme. There are two pupil representatives within the upper school. Relationships with the parents and Heath House are reportedly positive and any queries or concerns are generally resolved informally. All incidents are recorded in the children's log and the school has suggestion boxes that provide a method of raising issues. An 'independent listener' visits weekly and evidently knows the pupils well. All children are encouraged to attend the weekly boarders' meetings.

The Deputy Head is the school's Designated Senior person for Child Protection and the Head of Care is the designated trainer in child protection matters. The topic is covered in induction and all staff have received recent NSPCC training in child protection. In addition, the Local Education Authority has drawn up child protection procedures containing local interagency protocols on the prevention of abuse. There is written guidance for staff on avoiding allegations against them.

The school has an excellent anti-bullying policy and procedures. Pupils are encouraged to come forward with any bullying issues at an early stage so they can be resolved before the problem grows. Where necessary, risk assessments are carried out regarding children who are identified as either at risk of being bullied or being the perpetrator. Guidelines in the behaviour management of these pupils are also drawn up. The bullying risk assessment is updated annually. The Head Teacher described a recent initiative taken to counter 'cyber bullying' by banning the on-site use of camera mobile telephones in

bedrooms. Children spoken with said that the Head had explained the reason for the ban and they understood that it was in their best interests.

In accordance with the school's policies, the designated person ensures that all significant events relating to the protection of children in the home are notified to the prescribed authorities. Appropriate records are kept. The school would promptly notify parents of any allegation that a child had committed an offence. Staff would also pass on to the appropriate authorities any serious concerns about the emotional or mental health of a child. The school has access to a special outpatient resource.

The school has recently revised written procedures identifying action to be taken when a child is absent without authority. Should a child ever state that he or she went missing because of abuse at the school, appropriate Child Protection procedures will be followed. These procedures are frequently rehearsed as the circumstances have not arisen to date. Where children have parental permission to be absent from Heath House, the level and circumstances are agreed in advance. Care staff are aware of the measures that they may legitimately take to prevent a child from leaving without permission. There is a policy on physical restraint but such measures would normally be part of a package of care, agreed in advance and recorded in the care plan. All residential care staff have recently received training in 'Non-Abusive Physical or Psychological Intervention' (NAPPI) in September 2004 and a refresher course was given in September 2005. Additional training was also provided for RSW's in January 2005.

Boarders are aware of an agreed list of age-appropriate disciplinary measures. There is also a written policy on this and associated topics available to staff and discussed at team meetings. Senior staff approve any sanctions used in Heath House. Staff focus on positive reinforcement, rewarding good behaviour. Physical intervention is rarely used although there is a separate record book. The home also maintains an incident book that is signed by the children. Good recording was noted. The Deputy Head reviews any sanctions and physical interventions used. Children are given opportunities to discuss incidents and staff hold a de-brief session each morning at which these would be discussed, as well as at the weekly staff meetings. The Head of Care confirmed that sanctions would not be applied to groups of children in response to the misdemeanours of an individual child. Occasionally the police are involved at the school and in Heath House (usually at the request of staff to reinforce an appreciation of the seriousness of certain issues).

The school conforms to fire safety legislation and staff are alert to health and safety matters. There are visible fire alarms. Regular fire drills are conducted, gas installations are checked annually and electrical equipment and installations are checked every three years. Risk assessments are completed as risks are identified. Hot water delivery is regulated within safe temperature limits by means of thermostatic mixer valves on each hot tap. Radiators have

thermostatic controls. Risk assessments are in place for activities such as use of the school grounds, walking to school, off-site activities and minibuss journeys. Other risk assessments relate to in-house activities. No hazards were noted during the inspection.

All staff are recruited in line with the school's rigorous recruitment procedures and are properly vetted prior to employment to verify their suitability to work with the children. At least three written references are taken up and Criminal Records Bureau disclosures. Agency staff, volunteers and students on placements are all CRB checked.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- The school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school.(NMS 12)
- Children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities both within the school and in the local community.(NMS 13)
- Children receive individual support when they need it.(NMS 22)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

12, 13 & 22

The school's residential provision, including in-house facilities and homework support, actively supports children's educational progress.

Children are able to participate in a wide range of social, educational and recreational activities that enhance the boarding experience at Heath House.

The care planning and communication systems in place ensure that children receive individualised support and appropriate guidance that promotes their well-being and maximises inclusion in the life of the school.

EVIDENCE:

Residential support workers and the main school staff follow an integrated 24-hour approach to ensure individual children's educational progress. Care staff receive copies of the children's educational plans and set target plans that also cover social skills. There is a central study area in Heath House for the younger children and older children have study bedrooms, with an identified space for doing homework. Staff are always on hand to provide guidance and encouragement, including the provision of teaching staff for homework support. Adequate resources are provided, including access to the main school library, computers designated for study use (the children said they would like more of these and more are planned) and controlled access to the internet. All staff work towards encouraging each child's personal, social and educational development and achievement, including independent living skills.

Boarders have opportunities to engage a wide range of activities and certain activities in the community (such as bowling) are particularly popular. Participation is encouraged, according to individual choice as well as collective

choices made at boarders' meetings. For example, a keep-fit room was set up after consultation with the children. Hobbies are encouraged and supported. Secondary-age children attend after school clubs; other activities include weekly art sessions, cookery sessions, swimming and ice-skating. Children are also encouraged to join local deaf clubs. There are regular shopping outings for those who need escorting. Children often bring toys etc. from their homes. Risk assessments in respect of activities are made as necessary. Staff monitor video/DVD choices for age appropriateness and there is also a compact disc player. The home purchased a new "plasma" television in 2003, which is based in one of the main lounges and has proved to be a very popular because of the ease of reading subtitles it provides. Cultural awareness is raised as appropriate and cultural evenings are occasionally organised.

Each boarder has a plan of care (and each pupil has an individual education plan). Staff follow the care plans to provide individualised support. All residential staff are available to boarders, to support them with any personal or welfare concerns and they also take care to ensure that no boarder is left isolated within the school. Everyone is encouraged to participate in social groups and isolation is minimised by the school's policy of only admitting pupils with broadly similar needs. A prominently displayed poster reminds children that anything can be discussed and boarders also have access to the independent visitor. Each child also has an adult family member available to support them. In effect, none of the boarders has English as a first language although this is not a disadvantage in this setting. The professional services of audiologists, speech and language therapists etc. are available to pupils as needed. All staff are expected to develop fluency in signing using British Sign Language, symbols etc. The children interviewed said they felt very well supported by staff and could raise issues with them confidently.

Support is given to pupils following any traumatic incidents. For example, the school would involve a bereavement counsellor if required.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run. No child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views.(NMS 2)
- Children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect.(NMS 9)
- Children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes.(NMS 11)
- Children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school.(NMS 17)
- In accordance with their wishes children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while living away from home at school.(NMS 20)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

2, 9, 11, 17 & 20

Children are consulted about the running of Heath House, are encouraged to express their views and make suggestions for improvement and feedback is given in respect of the consultation processes.

Relationships between staff and children are positive, based on mutual respect and understanding of individual needs and preferences.

The processes of admission and leaving are sensitively planned and handled.

Children's needs are assessed and care plans detailing how they are to be met are devised.

Children are encouraged to maintain contact with their families while they are in residence at Heath House.

EVIDENCE:

The school has developed excellent systems to encourage pupil involvement. The opinions of children are sought in a variety of ways. For example, Heath House operates a keyworker system and children are encouraged to attend at least part of their review. There is a range of pictorial aids to assist with communicating any requests, suggestions and concerns about the operation of

the school. There is a contact book system between home and school. As far as possible boarders are included in decision-making and the rules of Heath House are agreed with the children annually and published. Boarders follow various faiths and although staff are sensitive to their needs, religious beliefs appear to be kept private and followed at home. Consultation uses the child's preferred means of communication, documented in care plans. Another communication tool is the "red box" system whereby pupils are encouraged to post comments about the school, suggestions for improvement or requests for specific equipment. These boxes are emptied each month and reviewed every half term. The written responses of senior staff are displayed on the board next to the red boxes. There is also a comments/concerns book available. The children spoken with felt they were substantially involved in the running of the school.

The staff should be congratulated on their relationships with the children, which seemed very positive and based on mutual respect and trust. At all times staff used appropriate communication methods when addressing the children, explaining what they were doing and why. There are detailed guidelines in place that need to be followed as part of the behavioural support plans for each child. Staff use various systems based on rights and responsibilities to reward positive behaviour. The importance of positive reinforcement rather than the use of sanctions is stressed at staff meetings. The children recognised that staff needed to set consistent boundaries that were in their interests. The keyworker system provides extra individual support for each child. As far as possible, taking into account residential staff numbers, children are able to choose who provides them with personal care.

All admissions are planned. The Head of Care usually arranges an overnight stay before full weekly boarding is offered. Targets are identified in care plans to prepare children for leaving Heath House. Any 'looked-after' children will have a planned leaving care process when the time comes (but they are placed at Heath House due to their educational needs rather than other matters). Most of the children who board do so because of the distance that they have to travel from home (although some only stay over on activity nights). Heath House staff obtain as much information about a child as necessary to ensure a satisfactory stay. No emergency admissions are accepted of children who have had no previous involvement with the unit. Children who seek admission to Heathlands School have a requirement for sign language incorporated in their Statement of Special Educational Needs.

Each boarder has an individual care plan (ICP) agreed and set up between the child and the keyworker after completing a half term. The plan details the child's assessed needs and how they are to be met. The child is also involved in the review and monitoring process. Weekly logs are written on each child, used to contribute progress information for the annual review. The children's statements of educational needs are reviewed annually, or more frequently if appropriate. 'Looked after' children have regular Status reviews. Residential

care staff contribute to all relevant meetings and case conferences. Care plans were not formally examined at this inspection but the system remains unchanged and therefore retains its commendable rating under the standard.

Children are encouraged to maintain contact with their families during the week. The children board for four nights. Contact is maintained by using E-mail, text messages and the video link telephone, Minicom and facsimile facilities. Some children interviewed said using e-mail to keep in touch was invaluable. There are rooms available for children to meet with their families in private if they wish to visit during the week. Restrictions are imposed where necessary for any 'looked after' children.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Children can wear their own clothing outside school time, can secure personal requisites and stationery while at school, and are helped to look after their own money.(NMS 16)
- Children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living.(NMS 21)
- Children live in well designed and pleasant premises, providing sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs.(NMS 23)
- Children live in accommodation which is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use.(NMS 24)
- Children are able to carry out their personal care in privacy and with dignity.(NMS 25)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

16, 21, 23, 24 & 25

Children may wear their own clothes outside school time and can use local shops with support as necessary.

Children are prepared for leaving the school and towards independent living.

The premises are well designed and suitable for the needs of the children, with special equipment provided as necessary to maintain their safety and security.

The accommodation is maintained, furnished and decorated to a good standard, with adequate facilities for the children to provide a safe and a safe and comfortable environment.

Adequate bathing, and toilet facilities are provided that allow the children reasonable privacy and dignity in respect of their personal care.

EVIDENCE:

Boarders are encouraged to change into their own clothing as soon as school is over for the day. Some children may visit local shops in the early evening and others go out on organised shopping trips. As weekly boarders, young women usually bring their own supply of sanitary protection from home but can obtain emergency supplies from the female first aid worker. Usually, children manage

their own money on a weekly basis (a maximum of £5 is recommended), although support is available to the younger children (when this happens, they have an individual pocket money book and there is a record of transactions kept on their individual files).

The Head Teacher stated that individual targets are identified and noted on care plans to prepare children for leaving Heath House. One older child spoken with felt she was being given appropriate guidance in advance of this significant step.

The school was originally designed and built for primary-age children but now Heath House also accommodates secondary-age children. As well as some remodelling of the premises maximum boarding numbers have been reduced in order to comply with the National Minimum Standards. The unit could provide accommodation for 30 boarders in a combination of single and double bedrooms. Staff appreciate the need for gender separation and make suitable arrangements for children who want or need single bedrooms. However, it is acknowledged that for most children in this school, partitions in bedrooms hinder communication. Specialist equipment available to boarders includes minicom, vibrating fire alarms and vibrating alarm clocks. There is also a listening device used to alert waking night staff to potential problems (this is noted in the prospectus and all boarders know about its use). Outside school hours all external doors are locked to prevent unauthorised entry.

The premises were not formally inspected on this occasion. However they are maintained to good decorative standards with plans to redecorate some areas during 2006. The central heating system was repaired in 2005 and is now working well. Each bedroom is appropriately appointed and each boarder has a surface on which they can study. Boarders share through choice and according to age. Bedrooms are equipped with flashing fire alarms and vibrating pillows. There are communal areas, a games/study/art & crafts area, a domestic sized kitchen and a utility room. All boarders have a lockable facility. Boarders may bring in their own bedding if they wish, although the linen provided in-house is not institutional in appearance. There are staff sleep-in rooms at each end of the unit. There is auditory monitoring available at night. Apart from the residential care team no other school staff have access to bedroom corridors. Staff make frequent security checks.

Based on current occupancy, Heath House offers a ratio of 1:4 toilets, three baths and two showers (the younger children have two of the baths available to them and staff and visitors to the unit have a separate provision). Bathroom, toilet and shower doors are fitted with locks that can be overridden by staff in the event of an emergency. There are en-suite sinks in all the bedrooms except those used for single occupancy. Hot water is thermostatically controlled at the boiler to ensure safe temperatures. Heath House does not currently accommodate physically disabled children, but adaptations would be introduced as required.

Management

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils.(NMS 1)
- Children's needs, development and progress is recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions.(NMS 18)
- There are adequate records of both the staff and child groups of the school.(NMS 19)
- Children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently.(NMS 28)
- Children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs.(NMS 29)
- Children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare.(NMS 30)
- Children receive the care and services they need from competent staff.(NMS 31)
- Children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools.(NMS 32)
- The governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school.(NMS 33)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

1, 18, 19, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32 & 33

Adequate information is available to children, parents, staff and placing authorities about the school's philosophy of care and the service to be provided.

Children's needs and progress are recorded.

The children are looked after by adequate numbers of well trained and competent staff who are deployed effectively to ensure that children receive proper individual attention and their needs can be met in a timely and safe way.

All staff are well supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare to achieve the aims of the school as defined in the statement of purpose.

The school is run efficiently in the interests of the pupils and the school governors carry out regular and effective monitoring to ensure standards remain high and the school continues to develop in line with modern care practice.

EVIDENCE:

The School's Statement of Purpose describes the proposed operation, ethos and philosophy of the School and its residential unit Heath House. It is written in plain English and outlines the approach to education and boarding. The school governors review and update the document annually. It refers to positive working links between the school and Heath House that create a continuum of care for weekly and occasional boarders. Read in conjunction with the school Prospectus, the Statement of Purpose provides a full picture of the range of services on offer. In line with the school's accessibility plan a child-friendly version is also available that reflects the wide range of ages accommodated.

It has previously been established that appropriate records are compiled in respect of each child and are held securely. Each child has access to his or her own file. The Head Teacher is fully aware that these records must be kept for a period of 21 years, or passed on to the next school. Similarly, the required records are kept in respect of staff. Some records are kept in the main school building, such as personnel records and the accidents book. Records relating to menus, risk assessments and child healthcare needs are kept in Heath House. Each child has their own independence checklist record, as skills are attained so they are recorded as being met. This checklist is clearly presented and provides a quick reference point to a child's attainment. The Head Teacher is aware of the legally prescribed timescales for the retention of personnel and children's records.

After a 10.00 am finish on a Friday, Heath House is staffed from 12 noon to 10.00 am the following Monday and from 6.45 to 10.00 am followed by 3.15 to 10.00 pm Tuesday to Thursday. There is always a staff gender balance. Night cover is by two members of staff sleeping-in and a female night supervisor awake. The school's health and safety policy prescribes that appropriate arrangements be made for escorting children off-site. Rotas were available to demonstrate that Heath House was adequately staffed. No agency workers are used. Cover for potential staffing shortfalls caused by annual leave and sickness has been made easier by the in-house creation of a bank of relief staff, following a successful advertising campaign by the school. This very positive development is most commendable as the school had waited in vain for a response to this longstanding problem from HCC Children, Schools and Families Department.

Staff undergo thorough induction and ongoing training and performance management as part of the supervision process. Training needs specific to Heath House are identified and suitable courses arranged. Staff also take part in whole school training days. All staff have received in-house training in child protection, with policy updates distributed regularly. All residential support workers employed at the home are currently either working towards or have achieved NVQ3 in caring for children and young people. Staff spoken with confirmed they had also received additional relevant training in line with their individual training profiles. The school also has a rolling programme for sign language and deaf awareness. The school holds five inset days per year and arranges the majority of training through Hertfordshire CSF.

All staff receive formal individual supervision and a confidential record is kept. New recruits have weekly sessions, other staff during each half term. On the job support is provided by the Head of Care and senior management team. Staff spoken with confirmed they felt well supported. The Head Teacher receives professional support via regular contact with the Chair of Governors, the Special School Forum and peer group support. The Head of Care has weekly meetings with the Deputy Head. Residential care staff are included in the whole school annual appraisal process. Heath House staff meet each day to discuss current issues and also liaise frequently with other school staff. Minuted staff meetings are held every Monday. The Headteacher and the Deputy Headteacher share on-call night duties each week. Smoking is not permitted on the school site.

The Head of Care has six years experience as a residential support worker working with deaf children. He holds a professional qualification and NVQ3 and is taking the NVQ4 course. Normally the first twenty minutes of each shift are devoted to handover sessions and planning. The Head Teacher explained that the school was developing a new critical incident plan to cover foreseeable crises such as the recent Buncefield Depot explosion during which Heathlands' key personnel had been left off the HCC notification list thus exposing a gap in the current arrangements. The requirements of the Working Time Directive are currently being investigated by HCC. The school is very well managed with clear lines of accountability and strong support systems in place. The result is a friendly and relaxed atmosphere where the children's needs are consistently met in a stimulating and fulfilling environment.

The Commission for Social Care Inspection is notified of any significant events that occur within Heath House. The Head Teacher or a delegated senior member of staff monitors and signs all the records listed in this standard. The Head Teacher and the Head of Care consider and take any action required as the result in relation to any trend or pattern identified in the records. Annual reports are prepared for governors and parents. The whole school is audited annually including Heath House. There are clear and comprehensive policies for budgeting and other financial responsibilities. Administration staff support the

Head Teacher to apply proper financial controls. Heath House is included in the school's annual budget and development plan.

The inspector had a discussion with a visiting School Governor on the afternoon of the inspection who was very well informed about Heath House and evidently familiar to both staff and pupils. The Governors provide a high level of support and monitoring and make visits to Heath House at least half-termly, mostly unannounced. Detailed reports on the conduct of the school are produced, with action points noted. The Governors' annual report is sent to all parents and guardians.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools have been met and uses the following scale.

4 Standard Exceeded (Commendable) **3** Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
2 Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls) **1** Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion

"N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
14	3
15	3

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
4	4
5	3
6	4
7	3
8	3
10	4
26	3
27	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	3
13	3
22	4

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
2	4
9	3
11	3
17	4
20	3

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
16	3
21	3
23	3
24	3
25	3

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	4
18	3
19	3
28	3
29	3
30	3
31	4
32	3
33	4

Are there any outstanding recommendations from the last inspection? No

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

This section sets out the actions that must be taken so that the proprietor meets the Children Act 1989, Inspection of Schools and Colleges Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards.

No.	Standard	Recommendation	Timescale for action (Serious welfare concerns only)

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