



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Residential Special School (not registered as
a Children's Home)

Mulberry Bush School

Standlake

Witney

Oxfordshire

OX8 7RW

2nd 4th 5th 6th 7th October 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Launched in April 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) is the single inspectorate for social care in England.

The Commission combines the work formerly done by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

The role of CSCI is to:

- Promote improvement in social care
- Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market
- Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services
- Hold performance statistics on social care
- Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services
- Register and inspect services against national standards
- Host the Children's Rights Director role.

Inspection Methods & Findings

SECTION B of this report summarises key findings and evidence from this inspection. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

4 - Standard Exceeded (Commendable)

3 - Standard Met (No Shortfalls)

2 - Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls)

1 - Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

'9' in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not applicable.

'X' is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Name of School

Mulberry Bush School

Address

Standlake, Witney, Oxfordshire, OX8 7RW

Tel No:

01865 300202

Fax No:

01865 300084

Email Address:

Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school

Mulberry Bush School Limited

Name of Head

CSCI Classification

Residential Special School

Type of school

Date of last boarding welfare inspection:

29/06/03

Date of Inspection Visit		2nd October 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		9.00am	
Name of CSCI Inspector	1	Rosemary Dancer	095311
Name of CSCI Inspector	2		
Name of CSCI Inspector	3		
Name of CSCI Inspector	4		
Name of Boarding Sector Specialist Inspector (if applicable):			
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Mr John Diamond and Mr John Turberville	

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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Residential Special Schools are subject to inspection by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) to determine whether the welfare of children (i.e. those aged under 18) is adequately safeguarded and promoted while they are accommodated by the school.

Inspections assess the extent to which the school is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools, published by the Secretary of State under Section 87C of the Children Act 1989, and other relevant requirements of the Children Act 1989 as amended. Residential Special Schools are not registered as children's homes unless they accommodate, or arrange accommodation for, one or more children for more than 295 days a year.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of Mulberry Bush School

The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Recommended action by the school
- Advisory recommendations on boarding welfare
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the lay assessor (where relevant)
- The Head's response and proposed action plan to address findings

INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections are undertaken in line with the agreed regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Children Act 1989 as amended, with additional visits as required.

The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL AND RESIDENTIAL PROVISION

The Mulberry Bush is a non-maintained residential special school. It provides an integrated programme of therapeutic residential care and education for 40 weeks of the year for up to 36 emotionally troubled and vulnerable children. The age range of the children is between 5 and 12 years. Many of the children who are placed at The Mulberry Bush have had difficulties in mainstream schools. The school aims to equip each child with the personal, emotional, social and learning skills to cope in a family and in a local school and community. The therapeutic provision of the school is based on psychodynamic principles.

For the duration of their career at the school children live in one of four households - Rainbow, Sunset, Pegasus or Jigsaw. Each living accommodation is purpose built and unique in terms of design. The style of decoration and furnishing creates a domestic atmosphere and each household has an enclosed garden. The houses are clustered around a large open area known as 'the village green' and are located close to the education facility. The teaching block, which includes five classrooms and a library, is bright, attractive and inviting.

The school has a team of three qualified social workers known as the family team. This team devotes the majority of their time to supporting parents and carers and to promoting the links that those individuals and the representatives of placing authorities have with the school. At the time of this inspection a fourth post had been created within this team and the inspector was informed that the recruitment process was in progress.

The school has a team of five workers, called Shifford, whose remit is to provide a pulling force by the provision of positive interventions through the use of clubs, activities and planning of whole school events. The team works across the school and is available in between the hours of 8.00am and 10.00pm.

The school employs a consultant child and adolescent psychotherapist, a full-time art therapist and a part-time child and adolescent psychotherapist. It also employs a full-time training a staff development officer.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL IN BOARDING WELFARE

- It has good systems to ensure that children and their parents or carers are enabled to take part in the planning and decision making processes.
- It has good systems in place to ensure that the admission and leaving processes are carefully planned and take into account the needs of the individual child.
- It provides a range of ways in which children are enabled to put their views across and are listened to, both on an informal and formal basis
- It has close working relationships with the local community including the local vicar, community police officer and local schools.
- It has an effective approach to behaviour management and modification with a high emphasis placed on praise and encouragement.
- It has excellent monitoring systems in place especially in respect of behavioural issues. Prompt responses are made in the event of a deterioration of behaviour in respect of an individual child or where patterns of negative behaviours are emerging among a group of children.
- It has an integrated approach between education and care staff which means a consistent approach is taken towards each child.
- It has good facilities and arrangements for a range of enjoyable and meaningful activities to take place on a daily basis
- It has comprehensive planning and review processes which are geared to meet the identified needs of the children.
- It has good relationships with parents and carers with a warm and inviting approach being taken to visiting parents.
-

- It provides excellent support to children on an individual basis which is geared to the needs of the child.
- It has attractive, comfortable and well-maintained accommodation, both in terms of the residential and school accommodation.
- It provides a good adult to child ratio, which allows for a good level of supervision.
- It provides staff with comprehensive training and support services.
- It has a strong, dedicated management team with managers being progressive in their outlook and inclusive in their approach.
- It has a committed and motivated staff team with the well-established staff displaying a high level of awareness of the needs of the children who attend the school.

WHAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD DO BETTER IN BOARDING WELFARE

- As identified in the recommendations made in this report, the amendment of some policies and procedures is required in order to fully meet the National Minimum Standards.
- As identified in the recommendations made in this report, some further work on some risk assessments is required in order to fully meet the National Minimum Standards.
- As identified in the recommendations made in this report, the CSCI should receive notifications about significant events as detailed in Standard 7.
- As identified in the recommendations made in this report, some further development around the medication systems in place are required in order to fully meet the National Minimum Standards.
- As identified in the recommendations made in this report, some clarity needs to be gained about the requirements in terms of environmental health and food preparation in the households and the requirements of the fire department.
- The school should ensure that recommendations made at each inspection are addressed in a timely way.

CONCLUSIONS AND OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS ON BOARDING WELFARE

The inspector concludes from the evidence gathered from this inspection that the school is overall a well-managed establishment.

The inspector formed the view that whilst this inspection has identified some shortfalls in meeting the minimum standards which had not been previously identified, these were in the main around policy and procedure documents and do not reflect a fall in the high standard of practical care and support provided to children.

The inspector considers that the identifying of these areas of development within the school arises out of the general increase in the consistency of understanding and interpretation of the standards that has developed since the standards were first published in April 2002, and does not reflect a decrease in the standard of care experienced by the children but rather is a fine tuning of the systems that are already in place.

The inspector was a little disappointed to note that some recommendations made as a result of last year's inspection had not been fully addressed and will be looking to follow up recommendations made as a result of this inspection during the first quarter of 2005.

The Mulberry Bush School is fundamentally a therapeutic setting and as such the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools do not address some of the key practice taking place in the school. The Mulberry Bush School is a member of the Charterhouse Group of Therapeutic Communities, a charitable organisation. This organisation has developed a set of standards which are described on the organisations website as follows:

“These standards for Therapeutic Communities are **value added** and complement the minimum standards expected to be fundamental to any residential childcare facility.”

The Mulberry Bush School works towards meeting the Charterhouse Group Standards.

The inspector would like to thank the management team and all staff for the way in which the inspection fieldwork had been planned to include the inspector in observing a number of significant meetings which provided the inspector with first hand experience of the planning, review and monitoring processes used in the school on a daily basis. The inspector would also like to thank all the children in the school who took the time to fill in questionnaires, speak to the inspector about their experiences and invited the inspector to dine with them and join them for activities.

NOTIFICATIONS TO LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY OR SECRETARY OF STATE

Is Notification of any failure to safeguard and promote welfare to be made by the Commission for Social Care Inspection to the Local Education Authority or Department for Education and Skills under section 87(4) of the Children Act 1989 arising from this inspection?

NO

Notification to be made to:

**Local Education Authority
Secretary of State**

NO

NO

The grounds for any Notification to be made are:

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IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FROM LAST INSPECTION

Recommended Actions from the last Inspection visit fully implemented?

NO

If No, the findings of this inspection on any Recommended Actions not implemented are listed below:

No	Standard	Recommended actions	
1	RS7	That the staff list which is inserted in the prospectus be amended to identify the designated members of staff for child protection.	October 2003
2	RS14	That prior written permission be obtained for the administration of first aid and appropriate non-prescription medicines and to seek medical, optical or dental treatment from the person or body with parental responsibility.	December 2003
3	RS14	That prescribed medication is not removed from the original containers and that written guidance to staff be amended to take account of this.	October 2003
4	RS14	That a written protocol on the provision of non-prescription 'household' medicines based on qualified medical, pharmaceutical or nursing advice be produced.	October 2003
5	RS26	That the temperature at those hot water outlets that are not thermostatically controlled, and that may be used by children, be routinely monitored.	September 2003

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS IDENTIFIED FROM THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The Head is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how recommended actions are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

RECOMMENDED ACTION			
Identified below are the actions recommended on issues addressed in the main body of the report in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders adequately in accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools. The references below are to the relevant Standards. Non-implementation of recommended action can lead to future statutory notification of failure to safeguard and promote welfare.			
No	Standard*	Recommended Action	
1	RS3	The procedure on searches should be amended to require staff to document the time, the date and the reasons for the search, to note what, if anything, was found, to show who carried out the search and who else was present at the time - whenever possible this should include the child. All records should be signed by all those present.	By 04/01/05
2	RS4	The general complaints procedure should be amended to include all issues contained in Standard 4. The children's procedure needs to be amended to include details about how to contact the CSCI.	By 04/01/05
3	RS5	The school's child protection policy and procedures should be amended to include all issues detailed in Appendix 1 of the Standards.	By 04/01/05
4	RS6	There should be a recorded risk assessment carried out in respect of bullying in line with Standard 6.5. This assessment should be subject to regular review.	By 04/01/05
5	RS7	That a clear system be established for notifying the Commission of significant events as detailed in Standard 7.	By 01/12/04
6	RS13	All risk assessments carried out in respect of children taking part in activities in the community should detail actions to be taken in order to minimise any risks identified.	By 01/12/04

7	RS14	That prior written parental permission be obtained for the administration of first aid and appropriate non-prescription medicines.	By 04/01/05
8	RS14	That prescribed medication is not removed from the original containers and that written guidance to staff be amended to take account of this.	By 04/01/05
9	RS14	That a written protocol on the provision of non-prescription 'household' medicines based on qualified medical, pharmaceutical or nursing advice be produced to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear system for the checking and the safe disposal of out of date or no longer required medication • A list of specific over the counter remedies to be stocked should be drawn up with clear advice for staff in respect of individual remedies which may interact with other medication being taken. • Any remedies in the list agreed which need to be labelled for an individual child due to risk of cross infection. 	By 01/12/04
10	RS15	That the environmental health officer be contacted to ensure that they are aware that food is prepared by care staff in the houses on a daily basis to ensure that, if necessary, the officer can arrange to inspect these food preparation arrangements and advise on any training care staff need in respect of food safety and hygiene.	By 01/12/04
11	RS26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the school arrange for three yearly checks to be carried out in respect of the electric installation. • That assessments of risk be carried out in respect of the arrangements for cooking and other communal activities which take place on a daily basis in the houses and from these assessments clear guidelines be produced for staff, for example in relation to the arrangements for preparing the evening meal. • The inspector recommends that the fire officer's view be sought in relation to the plans to fit all first floor windows accessible to children with restrictors in relation to the frequency of the fire system testing and in relation to what is required in the fire risk assessments. 	By 01/12/04

ADVISORY RECOMMENDATIONS

Identified below are advisory recommendations on welfare matters addressed in the main body of the report and based on the National Minimum Standards, made for consideration by the school.

No	Refer to Standard*	Recommendation
1	RS8	That when the guidelines in respect of missing children are next revised the details of the collection and return of children and actions to be taken on the child's return are included in the written guidelines for staff.
2	RS14	That the school produce a list of staff who administer medication and staff sign this so that their signatures can be recognised on medication records.
3	RS5	Consideration should be given as to whether the child protection training provided to staff needs to place more emphasis on what staff should and should not say to children making an allegation.
4	RS26	The temperature at those hot water outlets that are not thermostatically controlled and that may be used by children should be routinely monitored.
5	RS18	Consideration should be given to how all information required under Standard 18.2 can be kept in a form which is accessible to children.

Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix. E.g. RS10 refers to standard 10.

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS AND FINDINGS**

The following inspection methods were used in the production of this report

Direct Observation	YES
Pupil Guided Tour of Accommodation	YES
Pupil Guided Tour of Recreational Areas	YES

Checks with other Organisations

• Social Services	YES
• Fire Service	YES
• Environmental Health	YES
• DfES	YES
• School Doctor	NO
• Independent Person	NO
• Chair of Governors	NO

Tracking individual welfare arrangements	YES
Survey / individual discussions with boarders	YES
Group discussions with boarders	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group interviews with House staff teams	YES
Staff Survey	YES
Meals taken with pupils	YES
Early morning and late evening visits	YES
Visit to Sanatorium / Sick Bay	NA
Parent Survey	YES
Placing authority survey	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Individual interview with pupil(s)	YES
Answer-phone line for pupil/staff comments	NO

Date of Inspection	2/10/04
Time of Inspection	9.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs.)	42
Number of Inspector Days spent on site	5

Pre-inspection information and the Head's Self evaluation Form, provided by the school, have also been taken into account in preparing this report.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Age Range of Boarding Pupils **From** **To**

NUMBER OF BOARDERS AT TIME OF INSPECTION:

BOYS

GIRLS

TOTAL

Number of separate Boarding Houses

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the CSCI assessment of the extent to which standards have been met. The following scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The scale ranges from:

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

"0" in the "Standard met" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

"9" in the "Standard met" box denotes standard not applicable.

"X" is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

STATEMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S PURPOSE

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- Children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils.

Standard 1 (1.1 – 1.9)

The school has a written Statement of Purpose, which accurately describes what the school sets out to do for those children it accommodates, and the manner in which care is provided. The Statement can be made up of other documents, e.g., Letter of Approved Arrangements and school prospectus, which are required to include specific information.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
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The school has a prospectus (Statement of Purpose) in which a range of information is provided in loose-leaf form. This system allows for easy update and amendment and meets this standard.

The contents of the statement were found to be informative and accessible to a wide range of abilities through the extensive use of photographs.

The inspector was informed that the statement was reviewed in April 2004 at the annual general meeting and no amendments were made.

The policies and procedures viewed during this inspection reflected the stated philosophy of the school. The observations of the inspector and the responses on the questionnaires which had been completed by pupils, parents/carers and placing social workers confirmed that, in practice, the philosophy of the school is implemented by staff on a daily basis and that children are encouraged to follow the same approach in their daily lives.

Each child is provided with a personalised copy of the children's guide. In addition to general information about the school and buildings, the guide includes details about the house they will be living in, the staff members working in that house, their keyworker, the class they will start in with details of the teaching staff and the general rules, activities and routines. In the inspector's view the document is an excellent example of a children's guide and the fact that it is provided to the child prior to admission allows the child and parents or carers the opportunity to develop a clearer view of what to expect and hopefully help to allay some of the worries which they may have.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way that the school is run. No child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views.
- Children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled.
- Children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration.

Standard 2 (2.1 – 2.9)

Children's opinions, and those of their families or significant others, are sought over key decisions which are likely to affect their daily life and their future. Feedback is given following consultations.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
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The school works with pupils and parents in establishing views about daily life and the longer term plans in a variety of ways, including:

- The daily group meetings which provide a forum for adults and children to express their views about day to day issues
- The day to day relationships between the staff and children. The inspector observed staff constantly engaging children in discussions which were aimed at establishing how children were feeling and it was also noted that staff were proficient in picking up non-verbal cues.
- One to one time with keyworkers. This is a well-established system in place which provides each child with one adult who co-ordinates the overall care of the child, acts as a link to parents and carers and provides one to one time for the child.
- Attendance at reviews or review feedback forms.
- The school council. This is made up of a group of children in the school and the council will discuss and resolve a range of issues brought to them by children. The children on the council are elected by the pupils at the school.
- The complaints procedure.
- Children's input forms for internal case conferencing.

- Via the family team.
- Through visits by a representative of The Voice of Children in Care

Of 14 Children who responded to the question 'do staff ask your opinions about school' seven responded 'Yes', one responded 'No', four responded 'sometimes' and two chose not to answer this question. Some children were able to identify the ways in which they were enabled to put forward their views. These included the school council, at reviews and during the weekly community meetings.

The 13 parents who responded to the questions on the questionnaire about how well they felt they are consulted, kept informed and listened to were all satisfied with these aspects. 11 of these 13 parents also felt they were consulted about big decisions the school was making about their child, eight felt they were consulted about how their child would be cared for, four did not feel they had been consulted and one parent did not answer the questions. One of the parents stated on the questionnaire that the family team had provided great support.

The inspector concluded that staff are effective in establishing children's and their parents' views and act upon these views wherever this is appropriate.

Of the six placing social workers who completed a questionnaire four stated that they had been consulted over the placement plan whilst two did not feel they had been consulted. However, all six respondents agreed with the placement plan in place for their respective children. One placing social worker identified that there had been some initial difficulties in respect of communication between her and the school but that this had been resolved following this issue having been raised by her.

Standard 3 (3.1 – 3.11)

The school and staff respect a child's wish for privacy and confidentiality so far as is consistent with good parenting and the need to protect the child.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

The school provides guidelines for staff on issues of privacy and confidentiality.

The children's records are kept safely and securely and staff seemed clear about issues of confidentiality and the restrictions on this where there are child protection concerns. The placing social workers who completed questionnaires indicated that the school manages contact arrangements well.

Children are able to make and receive telephone calls in private, subject to any restrictions agreed with placing authorities or ordered by a court.

There are a number of areas in the school in which children and parents are able to meet in private.

Staff were observed by the inspector as being sensitive to gender issues when dealing with children of the opposite sex.

Staff were observed as being sensitive to children's feeling when having to closely supervise a child, for example when a risk assessment has identified the need to closely monitor a child.

The school has guidelines in place for staff in respect of physical contact and intimate care. These are aimed at keeping children safe and protecting staff from false allegations. These guidelines include the procedure for carrying out searches of children's rooms and forbidding intimate searches of children. This procedure should be amended to require staff to document the time, the date and the reasons for the search, to note what, if anything, was found, note who carried out the search and who else was present at the time - whenever possible this should include the child. All records should be signed by all those present.

The representative of the Voice of the Child in Care visits the school on a monthly basis and this individual was named on a number of the children's questionnaires as someone they would talk to if they had any worries.

Parents and carers seem to generally use the family team as the initial contact when there are issues they want to discuss. It seems that it is often the case that these issues are dealt with on an informal basis by the family team.

Standard 4 (4.1 - 4.8)

Children know how and feel able to complain if they are unhappy with any aspect of living in the school, and feel confident that any complaint is addressed seriously and without delay.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The school has a written policy and procedural guidelines in respect of considering and responding to complaints. These documents do not detail the following:

- The means by which children can access their placing authority's complaints procedure
- The way in which external complaints will be managed (eg those from the local community)
- Details of how to make a complaint directly to the CSCI

In the reception area of the school there is a complaints and suggestions box which is managed by the designated complaints officer, the Head of Residential Therapy. The school has a discrete complaints record which details all complaints and their outcomes.

A specific procedure for children has been developed. This is child focused and contains boxes for children to complete about what happened and asks what they would like to happen next. There are details about how to contact the Voice for Children in Care representative. This document needs to be amended to include details about how to contact the CSCI.

Of the 21 children who completed questionnaires all who answered the question 'Would you know how to make a complaint?' all were able to identify at least one appropriate person to whom they would make a complaint. From the observations made by the inspector during the inspection it was clear that staff were taking any grievances expressed by a child seriously and working to resolve issues on an informal basis initially.

Of the 13 parents who completed questionnaires eight had received written details about how to make a complaint, four stated that they had not received such details and one did not answer the question.

Of the six placing social workers who completed questionnaires three stated they had not received written details about how to make a complaint, with the remaining three stating that they had received such details. All six stated that they had not needed to make a formal complaint to the school.

Number of complaints about care at the school recorded over last 12 months:

1

Number of above complaints substantiated:

0

Number of complaints received by CSCI about the school over last 12 months:

0

Number of above complaints substantiated:

0

CHILD PROTECTION

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse.
- Children are protected from bullying by others.
- All significant events relating to the protection of children accommodated in the school are notified by the Head of the school to the appropriate authorities.
- Children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded positively to on return.

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.12)

There are systems in place in the school which aim to prevent abuse of children and suspicions or allegations of abuse are properly responded to. These are known and understood by all staff (including junior, ancillary, volunteer and agency staff).

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

There are clear systems in place which are aimed at preventing the abuse of children. The inspector noted that all staff receive training in child protection issues regardless of their role and that staff spoken to about this issue were clear about how and whom to contact should a potential abuse situation come to their notice. Basic child protection training is provided during the induction process.

One member of staff who completed a questionnaire stated that the school could improve on increasing care workers' knowledge about child protection issues, in particular what to say and what not to say to children making an allegation. The inspector suggests that the director and head of care consider whether more time is needed during the session to provide clarity about this issue for staff.

The school has a system for grading and classifying incidents in the school and this system allows for the identification of incidents involving inappropriate sexualised behaviour and incidents where an injury has occurred. There is a weekly meeting during which senior members of staff consider all incidents which have occurred and identify whether a child should be placed on the high risk list which contains details of the risk a child may present or be at risk from, and identifies actions to be taken to minimise the risks. This information is kept in each house and classroom.

The director confirmed that there was a copy of Oxfordshire's Area Child Protection Committee procedures in the school. The director and the manager of the family team are the designated child protection officers within the school.

The school's child protection procedures need some minor amendment to ensure that they include all the requirements as set out in Appendix 1 of the Standards.

The school's child protection procedures clearly state that failure to report actual or reasonably suspected abuse or neglect is a disciplinary offence and provides staff with details of the level of support available for staff who are the subject of child protection allegations.

The inspector noted on the personnel files viewed that staff are required to sign to confirm that they have read and understood a range of policies and procedures; the child protection policy and procedures are included on this list.

The school has established routine links with other agencies including the police; links with the local children and families' assessment team are being established as there had been a recent change concerning which team deals with the school.

Comments from the questionnaires completed by placing social workers included that they felt their child was very safe in the school, that children receive good guidance and advice about keeping safe and two placing social workers identified that, in their view, a good level of supervision led to children being kept safe.

Number of recorded child protection enquiries initiated by the social services department during the past 12 months:

4

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.5)

The school has, and follows, an anti-bullying policy, with which children and staff are familiar and which is effective in practice. Where possible children in the school contribute to the development of the policy.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

The school has an anti-bullying policy in place and the inspector noted that staff and children held a good awareness of what constitutes bullying and how to respond to an incident of bullying.

During this inspection the inspector attended a session entitled 'Spiritual Time' to which children and staff are invited to. The theme of the session attended was bullying.

The inspector noted that each of the houses had anti-bullying posters displayed and that no bullying was one of the rules for each house.

The inspector also noted that staff were very aware of the potential for bullying and alert to and skilful in defusing incidents which could have developed into an incident of bullying.

The inspector was of the view that due to the skill of the staff and the levels of staffing in the school, incidents of bullying are quickly noted and dealt with appropriately.

The school does not carry out recorded risk assessments of the times and places and circumstances in which the risk of bullying is greatest. There has been a recommendation made in respect of this issue.

Of the 18 children who responded to the question on the questionnaire asking if they were being bullied at school 12 responded 'sometimes'. Of these 12, three stated that they had been physically attacked during an incident of bullying and the remaining comments described verbal bullying. Two children reported they were hardly ever bullied and four children stated they were not being bullied at all.

During the inspection the inspector noted that staff and the management team were alert to which children were predisposed to bullying behaviour and this corresponded to children named in some questionnaires as carrying out incidents of bullying.

The percentage recorded below is a percentage of the number of questionnaires completed and not a percentage of the school population.

Percentage of pupils reporting never or hardly ever being bullied

33 %

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

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.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

During this inspection the inspector became aware that some allegations that had been made by ex pupils and some child protection referrals had been made to the local authority assessment team by the school. The inspector was satisfied that the school acted appropriately in these cases and the issues had been investigated by the local authority and/or police. However, the CSCI was not notified of these allegations in line with this standard. The inspector has recommended that a clear system be developed for notifying the CSCI of significant events, and advised that records of all notifications are filed in a dedicated notifications folder.

NUMBER OF THE FOLLOWING NOTIFIED TO CSCI DURING THE LAST 12 MONTHS:

- **conduct by member of staff indicating unsuitability to work with children**
- **serious harm to a child**
- **serious illness or accident of a child**
- **serious incident requiring police to be called**

0

0

0

1

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.9)

The school takes steps to ensure that children who are absent from the school without consent are protected in line with written policy and guidance.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

There are guidelines in place which have been developed in conjunction with Thames Valley Police in respect of a child going missing from the school. These guidelines include a requirement for staff to consider a number of factors prior to involving the police, including the vulnerability of the child or children concerned.

Whilst the guidelines do not include the procedures for collecting and returning the child to school or the action to be taken on the child's return, an incident occurred during the course of the inspection where some children had absconded from the school. The children were seen by a senior member of staff on their return and a risk assessment was carried out detailing actions to be taken to minimise the risk of these children absconding again. The inspector has made an advisory recommendation that when the guidelines are next revised the details of the collection and return of children and actions to be taken on the child's return are included in the written guidelines for staff.

Number of recorded incidents of a child running away from the school over the past 12 months:

2

CARE AND CONTROL

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect.
- Children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff response to inappropriate behaviour.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

Relationships between staff and children are based on mutual respect and understanding and clear professional and personal boundaries which are effective for both the individuals and the group.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
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The inspector was impressed at the way in which staff worked with the children. The relationships between staff and children, whilst professional, were warm. Staff were noted on a number of occasions as having to deal with some very extreme behaviour which they were able to do in a proactive, as opposed to a reactive, way. There are clear consistent boundaries in place which were aimed at achieving a balance between children's wishes and feelings, and the need for protection.

All staff in direct contact with children are provided with training in positive care and control of children, and staff were noted by the inspector as being able to communicate effectively with children.

Whilst at the time of the inspection there was the need to use agency staff while recruiting permanent staff to newly created therapeutic care staff posts, the school had been able to ensure continuity by using the same agency personnel.

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.26)

Staff respond positively to acceptable behaviour, and where the behaviour of children is regarded as unacceptable by staff, it is responded to by constructive disciplinary measures which are approved by the Head of Care.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There are clear policies and procedures in place in respect of the control, disciplinary and physical intervention measures that may be used and a clear statement about prohibited sanctions. Overall, behaviour management techniques and strategies used in the school are based on positive reinforcement and this was noted by the inspector to include a high level of praise in terms of verbal praise and various more practical incentives, such as the giving out of certificates for positive behaviour which had been sustained over a period of time.

The 'Guidelines on Handling Difficult Behaviour: Sanctions Policy and Guide to Practice' emphasises using positive strategies for managing behaviour to reduce the need to use sanctions and restraints.

All staff working with the children receive training in behaviour management and restraint techniques. The inspector was pleased to note that this had included the volunteers who had only recently joined the school. The restraint technique used in the school is the PROACT-SCIPr-UK - the training officer and the manager of Shifford carry out this training for staff.

The inspector noted on the staff personnel files that staff had signed to confirm that they had read and understood the behaviour management policies and procedures.

There is a recording system in place for incidents which is based on a pro-forma. This document requires staff to consider the antecedents of the incident and, in doing so, allows strategies to be developed to avoid a recurrence.

Each house and the education team maintain a log of incidents and restraints. The logs are bound and numbered and overall the recording was of good quality. It was however noted by the inspector that in one log some staff were not recording the surname of children and the head of therapeutic care agreed to address this with the staff involved.

The arrangements in the school for recording incidents and restraints deviate from the National Minimum Standards which require separate recording in respect of incidents of restraint. However, the current system works well with all incidents being recorded and graded. The incidents which are graded high are the more serious ones and these are brought to senior managers attention within 24 hours. A chart is drawn up for each child on a weekly basis and the chart is considered at the weekly behaviour management meeting. For any child displaying a high level of disruptive behaviour an immediate risk assessment is carried out aimed at reducing the negative behaviours and keeping the child and other children safe. A panel meeting may be arranged to which the child and adults involved in the care of the child will attend to discuss the issues.

The inspector is of the view that the current arrangements work well in:

- Providing senior managers with an effective means of monitoring staff actions in the event of an incident
- Promoting the welfare of the children
- Allowing a quick response to be made in the event of an escalation of disruptive behaviour

The inspector formed the view that children have a sense of fairness in terms of how they are cared for and how their behaviour is managed. The inspector observed many discussions between staff and children about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and from observations and the sample of four children's files viewed, the inspector noted that behaviour management is regularly discussed with children. This view was confirmed by the overall responses from the children who completed questionnaires and answered the question which asked whether the staff are fair when they punish children. The responses were as follows:

- 7 stated very fair
- 10 stated quite fair
- 1 stated usually OK
- 1 stated very unfair

Of the 17 children who answered the question which asked whether staff discuss behaviour and punishments with young people, the responses were as follows>

- 14 responded yes
- 2 responded sometimes
- 1 responded no

The 13 parents' questionnaires returned showed that all 13 parents agreed with the rules and punishments used in the school and there were added comments such as the rules are 'child centred', 'appropriate' and 'sensible', with some parents stating that 'boundaries are applied consistently' and 'can be continued at home', and that the boundaries seem 'fair' and 'reasonable'.

QUALITY OF CARE

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes.
- The school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school.
- Children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities both within school and in the local community.
- Children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted.
- Children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs.
- Children 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.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.6)

Admission and leaving processes are planned and agreed with the child – and as appropriate, with parents and carers and placing authorities – as far as possible and handled with sensitivity and care by those concerned.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
<p>The school has clear, well stated assessment and admission processes which are carefully planned to ensure that each child has the best start at the school.</p> <p>The initial enquiry is usually taken by the principle social worker; she will make enquiries from a variety of professionals and the parents/carers of the child, in order to make an assessment as to whether the child's needs meet the stated criteria.</p> <p>For children for whom it seems their needs could be met, further comprehensive information is requested in writing and this is scrutinised by the principle social worker and usually the director of the school.</p> <p>The school expects a formal referral request for a placement from the child's local education authority or from a social services department prior to commencing a formal initial assessment. It is expected that parents' views about a referral have been gained prior to a formal referral being made.</p>		

Following a formal referral having been received, an information sharing meeting is held in the home area of the child, involving all professionals involved in the planning for the child. Following this meeting a clear view will have been able to be formed about what support the family will need.

The school's director will then visit the family, including the child, in their home and carry out an assessment to further inform the internal planning for the child. The parents/carers will then be invited to visit the school in order that they are equipped to support the child with the move.

There then begins the process of introducing the child to the school and this can be flexible in order to meet each child's needs. The general arrangement is that the child will visit the school with a parent/carer and social worker if there is one. The child and parents/carers will meet with the director and relevant Mulberry Bush staff, a current pupil will be assigned to the child as a buddy, and the keyworker, buddy and child will go to have a look around the school and ideally will have a meal in the house the child will live in and join other children for playtime. The child is provided with a personalised copy of the children's guide and chooses a duvet cover for their bed; this is put on the bed ready for when they are admitted. Before they leave the school they are given the opportunity to talk about the experience and ask any questions they may have.

The keyworker, family team and teacher will then develop a detailed plan for the child's first few weeks in the school in line with the specific child's needs.

On admission day, which is in general within a week of the visit, the parents/carers and child attend a 'getting to know you' meeting in order that the child's routine and things important to the child can be discussed. The child will then be settled in the house and the parent's/carers will leave. Each child's admission plan is developed so that until the child has settled and the staff have been able to carry out a clear assessment of vulnerability, the child is closely supervised. The buddy system continues for as long as the child requires this.

The first days of living in the school will vary for each child. In all cases there is a gradual introduction to the school day with a high level of one-to-one time with staff in both the house and the school setting.

The internal planning systems are that a case conference will take place six weeks following admission. This meeting is attended by the child's teacher, keyworker, family team member and the therapeutic advisor. The meeting devises an individual plan for the child and develops achievable targets. These plans are reviewed on a regular basis and are additional to any statutory 'child looked after' review.

In the case of discharge from the school the reviewing frequency will increase. There will be a well thought out plan in place which may include an increase in contact with home and a process of introduction to a new educational facility. The family team continue to support the parents/carers through this process and the school arranges for parents of children leaving the school to meet in a group to share and discuss their feelings about the transition.

At times, due to difficulties with placing authorities' planning processes, the school has had to place pressure on placing authorities to find suitable future placements so that detailed planning can take place. During this inspection the inspector became aware that one local authority was proposing to terminate a placement but that no alternative placement had been identified. The inspector was aware that the director was actively following this up. There was also a concern among staff about the effect the actions of this authority would have on the child and it was clear that the staff felt a collective responsibility to fully support this child during and following the move.

The inspector was informed that, when the child has moved on from the school, a planned period of support continues to be offered to the child and family if appropriate.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.7)

Care staff and the school's residential provision and activities actively contribute to individual children's educational progress, and care staff actively support children's education, ensuring regular attendance, punctuality and a minimum of interruption during the school day.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The inspector formed the view that the links between the residential provision and the education provision were strong. The care and teaching staff have a minimum of four points of contact during the school day and information sharing takes place during each of these periods. This ensures that staff from both disciplines are aware of any difficulties each child may be having at a particular point in time and means that appropriate support can be offered when it is needed.

One of the placing social workers who completed a questionnaire identified the integrated approach taken by school and care staff as being a positive aspect of the school.

In terms of support for a child regarding homework a number of the children who completed questionnaires confirmed that they receive help from care staff in their houses. The school also operates a system called 'catch up' where children who have not performed well in school will stay after the school day and be supported in catching up with work or will be helped to address the consequences of their behaviour.

There was a wide range of educational opportunities noted by the inspector such as activities and outings arranged, after school clubs, one-to-one time with an adult and general play sessions being arranged in such a way that they can be used as an educational process.

The school has a library which is additional to the books in the houses.

Care and education staff are fully involved in internal case conferences for each individual child during which personal, social and educational targets are developed and there are termly meetings held between the child, the child's keyworker and teacher during which the contribution to supporting the child's education is planned.

There is joint training for care and education staff on a fortnightly basis, regular whole school meetings, link meetings where a representative from each class meets with a representative from each house and school assemblies which children, education and care staff attend and during which certificates are given to children whose conduct in class and in their house has been good.

There is also a team of workers who work from a room located within the school buildings who support children who are finding it difficult being in class. This team is called Shifford. The work of the team involves providing some safe time-out space and to help children to settle. This team works across the school and supports children in the houses as well as the educational setting. The inspector formed the view that this team is valuable in providing children with focused support on a prompt basis in a non-stigmatising way.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.9)

Children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities both within the school and in the local community.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The school provides children with ample opportunities to take part in activities. The school has excellent facilities for play including a range of outdoor play apparatus, an all weather pitch, a large indoor play-room and, at the time of the inspection, a large purpose built hall was in the final stages of completion. This will provide children with increased opportunities to develop their skills in sporting activities and will be used for a range of other activities.

Clubs are held each evening. These are run by a range of adults including the local community police officer who runs the explorer club on a weekly basis. Other clubs run are a sports club, art club, sewing club, cooking club and video club.

There is a range of trips out in the community arranged by staff such as swimming, ice skating, shopping, horse riding, visits to the park, fishing and bike rides.

The inspector noted that, in line with a recommendation from the last inspection, staff are routinely carrying out recorded risk assessments prior to taking children on an activity away from the school. However, not all assessments viewed by the inspector included action to be taken to minimise any identified risk. The inspector has made a recommendation in respect of this issue.

The school has links with a local primary school and there is a pen-pal scheme between pupils and occasional football matches are played between the schools' football teams.

Children are encouraged to join in with local community activities such as this year's Oxford Art Week when some children made costumes. These were displayed in a range of stores in Oxford.

There is an annual trip to an outward-bound centre in North Wales for the older children. For the children remaining in school there is a carnival week during which a range of entertainment and activities is provided for the children.

The inspector noted from the children's questionnaires that, overall, children feel they have a good range of activities offered to them and most of the children who answered the question about activities were able to identify a number of activities they personally enjoyed doing whilst at the school.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.25)

The school actively promotes the health care of each child and meets any intimate care needs.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The school has a policy on health care.

Each child is registered with the school's GP. If the child has not received a statutory medical the school will arrange for an admission medical to be carried out. The school has excellent links with a local GP practice and receives regular visits from the practice nurse. There is a written medical assessment carried out on an annual basis.

The school medical records for each child are kept securely and the inspector sampled four of these files. The files sampled were found to have relevant information and up to date recording. For one child who had diabetes the inspector noted that there had been training for staff in respect of managing this child's diabetes and there was close liaison with the child's diabetic nurse and the local practice nurse.

Dental and optical checks are arranged, but for some of the children their parents prefer to take responsibility for ensuring that these are carried out.

There was a parental consent letter on each file in respect of delegating responsibility to the school to give consent for treatment in an emergency situation. The inspector has made a recommendation that this letter be amended to include a clear statement that in some events staff will administer first aid.

The inspector viewed two of the four medical cabinets which are located in each house. The medication was stored securely in each case and recording of administration was up to date. Some staff were initialling the medication administration records. The inspector had made an advisory good practice recommendation that staff provide a legible signature on these records.

Issues arising in respect of issues of medication were:

- There was a wide range of over the counter remedies which had been purchased by the school. No parental consents been obtained for the administration of specific non-prescription medicines as had been recommended following last year's inspection.
- Some of the remedies such as an eye wash formulation and a cream for use inside the mouth were not for a named child but for communal use. The inspector is of the view that there is a risk of cross infection and such remedies should be for a named child only.
- In one case there was a cough mixture which was some months out of date.

In order that the above are addressed the inspector has made a recommendation that a written protocol on the provision of non-prescription 'household' medicines, including which remedies will be stocked, be produced. This should be based on qualified medical, pharmaceutical or nursing advice.

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.15)

Children are provided with adequate quantities of suitably prepared wholesome and nutritious food, having regard to their needs and wishes, and have the opportunity to learn to prepare their own meals. Where appropriate special dietary needs due to health, religious persuasion, racial origin or cultural background are met, including the choice of a vegetarian meal for children who wish it.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

During the course of the inspection the inspector ate on three occasions with children.

The inspector joined the most recently admitted children for breakfast one day. This took place in one of the classrooms and was managed by care staff, teaching staff and volunteers. The occasion was a lively but well managed affair and provided the newer children with an opportunity to socialise over a mealtime with each other.

The inspector joined the children in one of the houses for lunch on one day. Lunch is cooked in the main kitchen and distributed to the houses for the children to eat. Mealtimes seemed to be geared to provide a space to discuss a range of issues. The inspector was impressed at the way in which staff managed some disruptive behaviour during the course of the meal with minimal disruption to the proceedings. Each house has its own dining area with sufficient space for staff and children to eat.

The inspector joined one of the other houses during the evening meal. Care staff prepare the evening meal in their respective houses and again the inspector was impressed at the efficient way in which staff managed some of the children's more disruptive behaviours and the time was used for catching up with each other's day and thinking about what activity each child may like to do.

The inspector was provided with food at each mealtime during the inspection and, in her view, there was a good choice available with each meal having vegetarian options and the food was well cooked and well presented.

The environmental health department was contacted by the inspector and confirmed that following an inspection of the main kitchens there had been no issues noted. The environmental health department had not carried out inspection of the kitchens in the houses and the inspector has made a recommendation that the director contact the environmental health officer to ensure that they are aware that food is prepared by care staff in the houses on a daily basis. This is to ensure that, if necessary, the officer can arrange to inspect these food preparation arrangements and advise on any training care staff need in respect of food safety and hygiene.

See Standard 26 for further discussion in respect of risk assessments when food is being prepared.

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.7)

Children are provided for adequately on an individual basis and encouraged to exercise their own preferences in the choice of clothing and personal requisites. Children who require assistance to choose what they wear and/or how they spend their money are provided with the assistance they need, in a way which maximises their choice.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The school does not provide clothing for children except for the school uniform. It is the responsibility of parents or, in the case of children who are subject to a care order, their local authority, to provide children with suitable clothing.

Children do receive weekly pocket money. The inspector viewed the pocket money records for one of the houses and noted that the system is well administered.

Children are taken by staff to spend their money and there is a limit on how much can be spent a week on sweets. Some of the children mentioned this on their questionnaires as something they would like to change. The inspector is of the view that the amount - 50p - is a reasonable amount for children to spend on sweets.

The inspector noted that staff provide good guidance for children on taking pride in their appearance and ensuring that their personal hygiene is well managed.

CARE PLANNING AND PLACEMENT PLAN

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school.
- Children's needs, development and progress is recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions.
- There are adequate records of both the staff and child groups of the school.
- 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.
- Children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living.
- Children receive individual support when they need it.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.8)

There is a written placement plan specifying how the school will care for each boarding pupil in accordance with his or her assessed needs, the school cares for that child in accordance with that plan, monitors progress in relation to that plan, and updates that plan as necessary.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

As stated and detailed in Standard 11, the school undertakes comprehensive assessment and planning for each child. The internal care plans are subject to regular review.

Each child has a keyworker allocated to them prior to admission and the keyworker role is to oversee the planning and care of the child. Children are not consulted about which member of staff is their keyworker and the inspector is of the view that, due to the age range the school caters for, this is appropriate. The inspector is aware that there is assessment to identify which member of staff would be best placed to keywork which child.

The majority of children who responded to the questionnaire question asking if they had a placement plan, if they knew what their plan was and if they agreed with their plan answered yes to all three questions. A significant number of these children stated that their keyworker had told them about the contents of their placement plans.

The school is fully involved in the statutory reviews held by the children's respective local authorities and children are enabled to take part in these reviews.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.5)

Each child has a permanent private and secure record of their history and progress which can, in compliance with legal requirements for safeguards, be seen by the child.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

The inspector case tracked the files of four children. Each child has a file containing basic details and care plans and statements of educational needs.

Details of any incidents and restraints are kept only in the bound incident book and this is a deviation from the standards. The inspector has recommended that the management team consider how it could meet Standard 18.2 in respect of ensuring that all information is available in a form accessible to individual children currently at the school and ex-pupils.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.3)

The school maintains clear and accurate records on the staff and child groups of the school, and major events affecting the school and children resident there.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

There is a register of children attending the school and adequate details about those working in the school.

The inspector viewed the accident record file and found this to be up to date.

The school operates a set staff rota and any deviations from this rota are recorded in the logs maintained in each house. On this occasion the inspector did not scrutinise the actual staffing hours worked.

There is a visitors' signing in and out book which requires visitors to state who they are visiting.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.6)

Subject to their wishes, children are positively encouraged and enabled by the school to maintain contact with their parents and other family members (unless there are welfare concerns) while living at school.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

Overall the inspector was impressed at the communication between the school and parents/carers. All of the 13 parents who returned a completed questionnaire ticked the yes box asking if staff are good at letting you know about things that happen to your child. One parent did comment that she would like the school to inform her sooner if her child is unwell.

All but one of the 13 parents who responded to the question asking if they were encouraged to visit the school ticked the yes box and additional comments in respect of visiting the school included:

- 'Always greeted by name, offered tea and time to talk.'
- 'They make you feel part of the family, welcome you with tea and meals, include you in everything.'
- 'Always feel welcome, everyone says hello from carers to domestic staff and groundsmen. They offer tea and coffee, welcome child's sister - she is usually allowed to play in and out for a while.'
- 'Always a friendly greeting from the reception staff, explain everything that is going on.'
- 'I am given lunch on every visit.'

The school has a self-contained flat which is available for families, social workers and other visiting professionals to use.

There are clear contact plans in place for each child. The inspector noted a number of children during the course of the inspection making and receiving calls from family members.

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.2)

Where a pupil is in care and will be leaving care on leaving the school, the school agrees with the young person's responsible authority what contribution it should make to implement any Pathway or other plan for the pupil before the pupil leaves school. These arrangements are in line with that young person's needs, and the school implements its contribution where feasible from at least a year before the pupil is expected to leave care or move to independent living. The school works with any Personal Advisor for the child.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

9

This standard is not relevant to this setting.

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.13)

All children are given individualised support in line with their needs and wishes, and children identified as having particular support needs, or particular problems, receive help, guidance and support when needed or requested.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

4

In addition to the keywork system there are a number of ways in which children are provided with individual support. The inspector was impressed at the collective commitment of the school management team and individual staff members to provide each child with individual support based on changing needs. The points of contact during the day allow staff to ensure that any specific issues worrying a child are known by all caring for the child and behaviour management at any point in time can be reassessed and managed in line with the child's changing needs

The majority of children's questionnaires showed that each child was able to identify more than one adult to whom they would feel able to make a complaint.

During the course of the inspection the inspector noted staff working to involve children in group activities on a number of occasions and staff appeared to be sensitive and supportive in respect of specific stresses individual children may be experiencing, such as being homesick.

There is an independent visitor who visits the school on a regular basis and some of the children named this person as someone they felt able to discuss a complaint with.

PREMISES

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children live in well designed, pleasant premises, providing sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs.
- Children live in accommodation that is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use.
- Children are able to carry out their ablutions in privacy and with dignity.
- Children live in schools that provide physical safety and security.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

The school is located, designed and of a size and layout that is in keeping with its Statement of Purpose. It serves the needs of the children and provides the sort of environment most helpful to each child's development, and is sufficient for the number of children.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
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The school is located on the edge of a large village; access to the school grounds is via a busy main road. The school is well set back from the road and children are accompanied by an adult at all times when leaving the grounds.

The premises have been subject to a series of redevelopment projects over the past eight years and provide excellent facilities which are in line with the schools stated purpose.

At the time of this inspection there were some outstanding issues in relation to recommendations made by the fire service. These are further discussed in Standard 26.

The premises are not used for functions or activities that compromise the care or privacy of the children living in the school.

There are precautions in place in respect of the security of the school and all visitors are required to sign a visitors' register.

On occasion auditory equipment may be used in the houses overnight to monitor any movement of children; this is only put in place where it has been assessed as necessary to safeguard the children's welfare.

There are appropriate links with the local community, for example the local vicar who visits the school, the community police officer who runs a weekly club in the school and links with a local school through friendly football matches.

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.19)

The school provides adequate good quality and well-maintained accommodation for boarding pupils, which is consistent with their needs.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The residential accommodation provided for the children is decorated and furnished to a high standard. The individual houses provide a domestic style environment and each house has a large garden containing some play equipment.

There is a maintenance team employed. A representative from this team attends the weekday morning meetings and necessary maintenance and repairs are promptly dealt with.

Each house has a housekeeper and the houses are cleaned on a daily basis.

Each house has a distinct sense of identity and children visiting their friends in other houses do so through invitation.

Most children have a single room. The rooms the inspector saw had been personalised and contained suitable furnishings. The small number of shared rooms are each occupied by only two children.

Each house has a phone which children can use in private subject to any restrictions in place in respect of contact.

There are facilities in the houses and in the school building for children to study and pursue any personal hobbies.

The response from the children's questionnaire varied as to whether they had any choice about furniture and how the bedrooms are decorated, with eight children saying they did have choices, five saying they had some choice and four saying they had no choice. The inspector is of the view that, as far as is practicable, children are given an appropriate level of choice about how their room is decorated.

Three of the houses have a laundry and older children are encouraged to use the washing machines. There is also a central laundry in which most of the washing is done.

There are rooms available for children to meet with family, social workers or other significant people and there is a self contained flat available for such people to stay overnight.

Each house has a staff sleeping-in room.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.7)

The school has sufficient baths, showers and toilets, all of good standard and suitable to meet the needs of the children. The school has appropriate changing and washing facilities for incontinent children where necessary.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

Each household has adequate bathing facilities and WCs.

These facilities include baths and showers, are located near to children's bedrooms and provide children with a good level of privacy.

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.10)

Positive steps are taken to keep children, staff and visitors safe from risk from fire and other hazards, in accordance with Health and Safety and Fire legislation and guidance.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The school has a contract in respect of servicing electrical equipment. In respect of the electric installation the school should arrange for three yearly checks to be carried out.

Whilst there is range of risk assessments in place in respect of issues detailed in Standard 26.3, during the course of the inspection the inspector was concerned to note that a very sharp knife was left accessible to children and used by one child, whose behaviour is known to be unpredictable. There were no risk assessments in place in respect of this type of issue and a recommendation has been made that risk assessments are carried out and, where necessary, guidance is produced for staff.

It had been a recommendation at the last inspection that risk assessments be carried out in respect of some unrestricted first floor windows. The inspector was informed that it is planned that all such windows be fitted with restrictors and that this is work in progress. The inspector recommends that the fire officer's view be sought in relation to this.

There is regular review of the implementation and effectiveness of action identified as a result of risk assessment.

Children and staff asked by the inspector about the emergency evacuation procedure were aware of the exits and assembly point. During the course of the inspection the alarms were activated and staff and children managed a quick orderly evacuation of the building.

The school carries out planned evacuations on a quarterly basis. There is no interim testing of the alarm and emergency lighting systems. The inspector is of the view that these systems should be subject to more regular testing than quarterly and has recommended that the fire officer is consulted about this.

In respect of a fire officer's report completed following an inspection carried out by him in May 2004 there are four outstanding issues as follows:

- The fire risk assessment needs review and it was agreed that further advice would be sought from the fire officer.
- The fire blankets should be checked during the test regime. It was agreed that this would be carried out at the next planned system check.
- A general fire notice is required at all break glass points. The inspector was informed that this work is ongoing.

- Consideration should be given to extending the automatic fire detection system to all parts of the main school building, especially in the new therapy rooms which are under sleeping accommodation rooms. It was agreed that whilst consideration of this was being given, this issue would be included in the fire risk assessment in order that any risks are identified and minimised.

The inspector tested the water temperatures in two of the houses. These were found to be within safe limits. It had been a recommendation made at last year's inspection that water temperature testing should be carried out, especially on hot water outlets that may be used by children and which are not thermostatically controlled.

There is a dog belonging to the manager of Shifford which is in the school on a daily basis. This dog is clearly a well loved and respected animal and her presence in the school provides children with a range of learning opportunities. The inspector noted that other staff members on occasion bring their dogs into school and take a group of children out to walk the dog. The inspector is of the view that whilst this practice is clearly enjoyed by the children in the school, there is a need for a level of caution in terms of any risk to children through injury or triggering an allergy.

Additional comments in relation to environmental health and food preparation can be found under Standard 15 of this report.

STAFFING

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- There are careful selection and vetting of all staff, volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers
- Children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently.
- Children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs.
- Children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare.

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.9)

Recruitment of all staff (including ancillary staff and those employed on a contractual/sessional basis) and volunteers who work with the children in the school includes checks through the Criminal Records Bureau checking system (at Standard or Enhanced level as appropriate to their role in the school), with a satisfactory outcome. There is a satisfactory recruitment process recorded in writing.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The school has robust recruitment systems in place. The inspector viewed a sample of staff personnel files and these were found to contain all the required information.

The school is a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) registered body and instigates checks on all prospective employees. The inspector noted that for one of the members of staff recently employed in the school who had been a volunteer a new check in line with his new role had not been obtained. The inspector was satisfied that this was a genuine oversight. The director was very clear that new CRB checks are carried out for all external applicants and in the case of an internal applicant when the role is to significantly change.

The inspector was informed that references provided are verified by a telephone call to the referee. Records of these were not seen during the inspection.

The appointment of volunteers should include all elements of the recruitment processes detailed in Standard 27. The inspector did not have an opportunity during this inspection to view the information held in respect of the volunteers so it is not possible on this occasion to confirm that this part of the standard has been met.

The school holds the relevant information in respect of agency staff members; the school tends to use a regular pool of personnel to ensure a level of continuity for the children.

Total number of care staff:	37	Number of care staff who left in last 12 months:	7
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Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.13)

The school is staffed at all times of the day and night, at or above the minimum level specified under standard 28.2. Records of staff actually working in the school demonstrate achievement of this staffing level.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The school has good adult child ratios and, in line with the European working time directive, the school is increasing the therapeutic care staff teams, and recruitment for these posts was underway at the time of the inspection. The inspector became aware during the inspection that the current staff teams were working in excess of their contracted hours and the recruitment of new staff will help to minimise the need for staff to work in excess of their contracted hours.

At the time of the inspection, which was during the recruitment of new care staff, there was regular use of agency staff. This was, however, being well managed with regular agency staff personnel being used and being located in houses they were familiar with as far as was possible. At the time of the inspection each house had a regular staff team comprising of a unit leader, a household manager, at least one senior practitioner and a minimum of five therapeutic care workers (as stated above the levels of care workers are about to increase.)

The school has a useful resource in the Shifford team which comprises of a team of five including the team leader. The team's remit is to provide support to the education and care staff in terms of children who are finding it difficult to manage their behaviour. The team works across the school and is available between the hours of 8.00am and 10.00pm. The team deploys a number of strategies to help children when in distress and can work on a one-to-one or group basis. This additional support is to be commended.

There were no students working in the school at the time of this inspection. There were eight volunteers working in the school at the time of the inspection and their roles were clearly defined.

There is an effective management on-call system in place.

Each house has an adult sleeping in at night and the telephone system provides sleeping in staff with the means to contact their colleagues in the other houses if necessary.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.6)

Staff receive training and development opportunities that equip them with the skills required to meet the needs of the children and the purpose of the school.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The school employs a part time training and development officer. Training is very high on the schools agenda. There is a planned induction training course (foundation training) which includes child protection, fire safety, health and safety, PROACT-SCIPr-UK (restraint) training and first aid. These courses are run on a rolling basis to allow for established staff to attend for updates or renewal where required.

At the time of the inspection therapeutic care work staff were not trained in food hygiene training. The inspector was informed that this training is to be introduced and the inspector has made a recommendation under Standard 15 that the school consults with the environmental health officer in respect of which training care staff will require. The foundation training also includes issues relevant to the staff member's role such as an introduction to the theories which inform the work of the school, logging and recording, structures and routines and the work of other departments in the school. These training sessions are held twice a week. The inspector joined one session during the course of the inspection. The session was delivered by the psychotherapist employed in the school who explained the therapeutic role. The staff members in attendance provided verbal feedback at the end of the session to the trainer and this feedback was very positive.

On completion of the foundation training staff receive principle training which provides staff with opportunities to further develop their skills and knowledge in terms of both theoretical perspectives and practice issues. Staff attend these sessions on a fortnightly basis.

The induction and principle training programmes link into TOPSS standards and NVQ Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. There is a well-established NVQ training programme in place.

On completion of the foundation and principle training programmes, staff are provided with opportunities to undertake further training as relevant for their role and professional development.

There is also joint training for education and care staff throughout the year which is linked to the school development plan.

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.13)

All staff, including domestic staff and the Head of the school, are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

All those working in the school receive individual supervision from either their line manager or, in the case of some senior management, a suitable external professional will provide supervision. Group supervision sessions are also held.

Supervision records are maintained.

The responses from the staff who completed questionnaires indicate that staff felt well supported in their role. All 17 staff members responded to the question 'How well supported are you in your work?' with either 'we receive a lot of support and guidance' or 'quite well supported'.

Staff members identified a variety of ways in which they felt supported such as individual and group supervision, process meetings, consultation sessions, team meetings, annual appraisals, training, staff/pupil ratio, men's group and peer support.

Staff have job descriptions and confirmed that they are provided with copies of policies and procedures and receive any updates of these promptly.

ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children receive the care and services they need from competent staff.
- Children enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools.
- The governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school.

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.17)

The school is organised, managed and staffed in a manner that delivers the best possible childcare.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The head of residential therapy has extensive experience in working with children and holds an NVQ Level 4 in Work with Young People, a Diploma in Therapeutic Child Care and a Diploma in Family Therapy.

The organisation, management and staffing of the school ensures that children receive a good standard of care and are provided with ample opportunity to redress previous adverse experiences. The management team constantly look to develop practice to achieve the best outcomes possible and the enthusiasm and commitment shown by the management team in their work can be clearly seen in staff at all levels including ancillary staff.

There are arrangements in place in respect of training in NVQ Level 3. The training and development officer is awaiting clarification around which qualifications are equivalent to this award as a number of staff employed at the school already have child care related qualifications.

Staff rotas are organised to ensure that staff have time for recording and other administrative duties, training, supervision care planning and other work related meetings and time to spend with children.

The school has made arrangements to recruit additional staff in order to comply with the European Working Time Directive.

The school provides parents with a pack of information about the school prior to a child's admission.

Percentage of care staff with relevant NVQ or equivalent child care qualification:

X %

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.5)

The Commission for Social Care Inspection is informed within 24 hours if a receiver, liquidator or trustee in bankruptcy becomes responsible for the school. Such persons on becoming responsible for the school have ensured that the school continues to be managed on a day to day basis by a Head who meets recruitment and qualification requirements for a Head under these Standards. Such a temporary Head must make sure that the operation of the school meets the requirements of these standards in relation to the day to day running of the school.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The monitoring systems in terms of monitoring records as detailed in Standard 32 are effective. For example, senior managers meet on a weekly basis to monitor behaviour management issues as detailed in Standard 10. During this meeting trends in behaviour are identified and any action required to modify the behaviour management of an individual child or a group of children is planned.

As stated in Standard 14 the monitoring system for checking medicine cabinets requires tightening up.

Standard 33 (33.1 - 33.7)

The governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body receive a written report on the conduct of the school from a person visiting the school on their behalf every half term.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The school has monthly visits from the trustees. A written report is compiled following these visits and the director holds copies of these reports. On this occasion the inspector did not view the copies of these reports.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

[Empty box for Lay Assessor's Summary]

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____

Date _____

PART D**HEAD'S RESPONSE****D.1 Head's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.**

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 2nd, 4th, 6th, 5th & 7th October 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Action taken by the CSCI in response to Head's comments:

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

Head's comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report

YES

Head's comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate

Note:

In instances where there is a major difference of view between the Inspector and the Head both views will be made available on request to the Area Office.

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 14th December 2004, which indicates how recommended actions and advisory recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

Status of the Head's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

NO

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

Other:

D.3 HEAD'S AGREEMENT

Head's statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies.

D.3.1 I _____ of _____ confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the recommended actions made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name _____

Signature _____

Designation _____

Date _____

Or

D.3.2 I _____ of _____ am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

Print Name _____

Signature _____

Designation _____

Date _____

Note: In instance where there is a profound difference of view between the Inspector and the Head both views will be reported. Please attach any extra pages, as applicable.

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