



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

Linden Bridge School

Grafton Road
Worcester Park
Surrey
KT4 7JW

Lead Inspector
Kerry Fell

Key Announced Inspection
20th June 2006 09:30

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Residential Special Schools*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

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

Those outcomes are:

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

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

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

SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of school	Linden Bridge School
Address	Grafton Road Worcester Park Surrey KT4 7JW
Telephone number	020 8330 3009
Fax number	
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school	Surrey Childrens Service
Name of Head	Mrs Ronwen Smith
Name of Head of Care	Mr Robert Smith
Age range of residential pupils	7-19
Date of last welfare inspection	24/11/05

Brief Description of the School:

Linden Bridge School is a local education authority (LEA) maintained special school for children with special needs, specifically for pupils who are on the autistic spectrum. The school provides a structured 24-hour curriculum, with the opportunity to build social skills, communication skills, and leisure and independence skills. A range of communication systems are used throughout the school including Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS), TEACCH (a structured treatment and education programme for children who with autistic spectrum disorders), and visual and written cues.

The school is based in a suburban area close to the towns of Kingston upon Thames, and Epsom, and has good transport links with the A3. The school is within walking distance of the local train station.

Boarding is provided for under 16's in brightly decorated flats on the first floor of an annexed to the main school building, over 16's are accommodated in a new purpose built FE Department building.

A newly built swimming pool was opened in June 2006.

Some parking is available within the school grounds, and further parking is available on the nearby street.

SUMMARY

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

This was the key inspection for the inspection year 2006/2007.

Mrs Kerry Fell and Mr Joe Croft undertook the inspection. The inspection was an announced inspection, which means that the school was given short notice that the inspection was going to take place. The inspection commenced on 20th June 2006, and took a day and a half to complete.

The inspectors reviewed policies and procedures, sanction, restraint and incident logs, pupils' records, and the management of medication. The inspectors spoke to pupils during the inspection and met with the Head teacher, the Head of Care, and the staff team. A tour of the school was also undertaken on the first day of the inspection.

The inspectors stayed to observe evening activities on 20th June 2006, and an inspector joined the pupils on their bowling activity.

Questionnaires were sent to the parents of the boarding pupils. 17 questionnaires were received from parents.

82% of parents who responded to questionnaires stated that the staff did a great job, and 35% of responses stated that the school was excellent or fantastic.

94% of parents stated that they had been advised about the school's rules, and 58% stated that they were aware of the punishments used by the school.

11% of parents stated that they wished that there was more explicit communication with parents, however all other parents stated that the school did consult them. Some parents even stated that communication was the best thing of the school.

Parents felt that staff were dedicated and skilled, and one parent stated clearly that the school was "Brilliant, excellent, wonderful, caring, considerate, compassionate, and set excellent role models."

What the school does well:

The school promotes the health and medical needs of pupils.

Policies, procedures and practice with regard to child protection, the absence of a pupil, prevention of bullying, complaints, the maintenance of privacy and confidentiality, and health and safety promote the pupils' welfare. The school exceeds the national minimum standards with regard to the prevention of bullying and the management of behaviour.

The anti-bullying policy detailed that it was developed in consultation with the pupils, their parents, and relevant staff. The pupils had identified indicators that they felt might suggest that a pupil was being bullied. The schools policy also included guidance to staff about how the specific behaviour of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders may leave them vulnerable to bullying, and this included examples from pupils of their experiences. Guidance was included within this policy on how staff could approach conversations with pupils who were identified as bullying others.

Posters and displays observed throughout the school prompted the pupils to tell someone if they felt that they were being bullied. Slips were available in the boarding area for children to write down messages for staff when they were feeling bullied, and telephone numbers were displayed for the children to make contact with child line or the independent person.

A policy with regard to permissible sanctions was available and was dated 2004 and was linked to other school documents including the school's Behaviour Management Policy (Care and Control), Individual Care Plan's – Emotional and Behavioural Needs, Anti-Bullying Policy, Whistle Blowers Chart, Complaints Policy. The sanction policy stated that in many cases a rebuke would be satisfactory for the management of misbehaviour.

The policy reflected that sanctions and the regular use of sanctions was not the part of the ethos of the school and this was reflected by the fact that only four sanctions had been recorded since the last inspection.

The school used positive options as a method of behaviour management and physical restraint, and the policy with regard to the methods of care and control, began with a section on Understanding and Managing the Challenging and Unwanted Behaviour of their Pupils.

The school used a range of approaches and teaching strategies to reduce anxiety and unwanted behaviour, which included the use of TEACCH, PECS and positive options, as well as the use of positive reinforcement and rewards. Where necessary, behaviour management plans were agreed with parents, in addition to physical intervention plans, which ensured that members of staff had clarity about how a pupil will be supported through an incident where physical intervention may be required.

The school's ethos ensures that pupil's individual needs are identified and met. The promotion of educational progress is paramount within the schools 24-hour curriculum.

The school had a detailed statement of purpose. Boarding pupils had created a CD-Rom video of what it was like to be a boarder at the school. The pupils should be commended for this video that was bright, friendly and covered important subjects such as it being "ok" to be a little bit homesick, because

there were always adults available, and how PECS boards and timetables were used to let boarders know what activities were going to take place.

Sufficient competent staff are available to support the pupils.

What has improved since the last inspection?

One recommendation had been made at the last inspection and this had been met.

What they could do better:

The school had taken the decision following the delayed receipt of a CRB check, based on a detailed risk assessment, for a member of staff to commence work without their CRB check having been received. The member of staff was receiving daily one-to-one supervision and never worked unsupervised with the pupils. They were also only able to work with pupils over 16 years of age. Evidence was available to demonstrate that both the school and the member of staff had chased up the CRB check.

Although the inspectors appreciated the difficult situation that the school and member of staff were in following the delay in receipt of the CRB check, the school must ensure that these are in place before staff commence employment.

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

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

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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Being Healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

14

Quality in this outcome area is **good**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The school promotes the health and medical needs of pupils.

EVIDENCE:

Pupils only board at the school for two nights per week, and therefore are registered with their family GP. Parents are responsible for attending to the health care needs of their child.

Medical files sampled evidenced that parents provide a written medical history when their child first attended the school, which included allergies, dietary needs, the name and contact details of the child's GP, and written consent for their child to receive homely remedies whilst boarding at the school.

The school had a medication policy and procedure that was followed by staff. This document had been reviewed in 2005.

Records sampled of medication administered to pupils were appropriately maintained on the medical administration record sheets. The head of care monitored records and the storage of medicines on a monthly basis.

On the day of the inspection the storage of medication was found to be satisfactory, and appropriately stored in secure, locked medicine cabinets. A second member of staff countersigned controlled drugs that were administered, in the control drugs log. The head of care monitored the records of controlled drugs.

The head of care stated no child administers their own medication.

During discussions, staff stated they had received training in the care of medicines and first aid. Training records viewed confirmed that training in these areas had been delivered.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

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

Quality in this outcome area is **good**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Policies, procedures and practice with regard to child protection, the absence of a pupil, prevention of bullying, complaints, the maintenance of privacy and confidentiality, and health and safety promote the pupils' welfare. The school exceeds the national minimum standards with regard to the prevention of bullying and the management of behaviour. Although the school's recruitment and vetting policies were sound, a requirement was made.

EVIDENCE:

It was evident from conversations with staff that privacy and confidentiality was promoted within the school. All members of staff spoken to were aware of the importance of only sharing information on a need to know basis. Pupils' files were held securely.

The school had a written policy on confidentiality that provided information in regard to maintaining the privacy of records, with whom and when to share information, and it directed staff to other policies and procedures that must be read, for example, Child Protection, access to records, and the staff code of conduct.

During discussions, staff stated that they respected and treated the children as individuals. Staff knock on bedroom doors before entering, and encouraged children to get changed within the privacy of their bedrooms. This was confirmed during discussions with children and during evening observations.

Care staff stated that intimate care was attended to in private and with a second member of staff in close proximity. When staff provided any form of intimate care they would fill out an incident sheet detailing how and what care was provided; these were viewed during the inspection.

Personal support was provided for the younger children, however, staff were clear that female staff would attend to the personal needs of the girls. The school had a comprehensive policy and procedure in regard to 'Care practices towards the opposite sex.' Intimate care plans were written for those who needed it. Care staff stated that the foundations with regard to privacy and confidentiality were discussed with pupils during PSHE lessons.

Children were able to make and receive telephone calls in private, or with staff support if they requested it.

The head of care stated that although the pupils only boarded for two nights a week, should parents wish to visit during that time, they could meet with their child privately.

During discussions, staff stated that pupils were able to make their feelings known to their key workers. Staff stated that they were able to detect by the mood of the child if there was something troubling them, at which time they would sit and talk to the child. The pupils confirmed that they would talk to their key workers if they wished to make a complaint.

Other resources were available to the pupils for raising or discussing their concerns, such as the school council or telephone help lines.

The school had a complaints procedure in place, however due to the specific needs of the children attending Linden Bridge School, staff would verbally discuss the way that pupils could raise concerns whilst at the school in a manner which the child could best understand. Visual cues are also used to

prompt the pupils how to raise concerns, and the school is considering how they could best use a formal written procedure that would be appropriate for the needs of these children.

The school maintained a record of complaints received, detailing the person making the complaint, the date, nature, and outcome of the complaint. These were evidenced during the inspection. Complainants received a written response of the outcome of the investigation into their complaint. Records evidenced that three complaints had been received during the last twelve months.

58% of parents who responded to the questionnaires stated that they were aware of how to make a complaint to the school. 11% of parents had made a complaint to the school. All of those parents who had complained had met with the Head teacher to discuss their concerns. It was not clear from their responses whether they were fully satisfied with the resolution of their complaint, although they did state that the complaint had been "resolved".

The school had a child protection policy dated 2004. Staff were very aware of the procedures, and would be happy to make referrals directly to the child protection team if necessary. They also had an awareness of the fact that the school held a whistle blowing policy and disciplinary policy and where these could be found if they needed them.

The school's child protection policy stated that any disclosure, concern or complaint would be taken seriously and handled sensitively. The policy referred staff to relevant legislation and other documents that they may wish to consult. The child protection policy also referred staff to other school policies including anti-bullying and behaviour management. A document was also available that discussed the specific areas of vulnerability for children with disabilities.

The child protection policy was found to be very detailed and easy to use, although some information as detailed in Appendix One of the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools, was not explicit within the policy, but was detailed within flow charts attached to the policy. The inspectors were advised that this policy was due to be reviewed, and the school must therefore ensure that this review takes into account the need to include the information detailed under Appendix One.

Staff had completed child protection training, and the head of care confirmed that all staff, including ancillary staff, received training in child protection awareness during their induction. Ancillary staff met during the inspection were not clear that they had completed child protection training, although it was recognised that they had worked at the school for several years. As discussed during the inspection, the school would be strongly advised to

ensure that ancillary staff are included in child protection update training during INSET days or staff meetings.

The school had an anti-bullying policy that had been updated in September 2005.

The anti-bullying policy detailed that it was developed in consultation with the pupils, their parents, and relevant staff. The policy described what behaviour might be considered bullying, and the pupils had also identified indicators that they felt might suggest that a pupil was being bullied. The schools policy also included guidance to staff about how the specific behaviour of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders may leave them vulnerable to bullying, and this included examples from pupils of their experiences.

Guidance was included within this policy on how staff could approach conversations with pupils who were identified as bullying others.

Posters and displays observed throughout the school prompted the pupils to tell someone if they felt that they were being bullied. Slips were available in the boarding area for children to write down messages for staff when they were feeling bullied, and telephone numbers were displayed for the children to make contact with child line or the independent person.

The head teacher and head of care advised the inspector that anti-bullying is highlighted each year and pupils are involved in activities, for example making posters to display in the school. Examples given of recent posters developed by pupils included a poster that just stated "NO BULLYING HERE". One pupil had also made a short film, as part of an art project, called "why am I always bullied", and this film was available on the school's website. Bullying is monitored via the school's incident forms, and risk areas are routinely monitored as part of the school's daily routines. The inspectors were advised about current action being taken by the school to reduce the risk of specific incidents of bullying.

The school exceeds this standard.

The school had a written policy for the event of a child being absent without authority. This detailed clear guidance on the procedures to be followed, and the persons to be contacted. This included immediate contact with the police once it had been established the child could not be located on the school premises. The policy stated that on the pupil's return to the school, they must be provided with the opportunity to discuss the reasons why they absconded. The policy also stated that if the reason for absconding was due to a child protection issue, this would be passed on to the Child Protection Liaison Officer for the school.

It was evident during discussions that staff were aware of the policy and knew what to do in the event of a child not being accounted for. The school had a method in place for conducting regular checks throughout the evening to ensure all children were accounted for.

The inspector viewed the records of absconding maintained by the school; there were no recorded unauthorised absences. The head of care stated that no child had ever absconded from the school.

A policy with regard to permissible sanctions was available and was dated 2004. This policy was linked to other school documents including the school's Behaviour Management Policy (Care and Control), Individual Care Plan's – Emotional and Behavioural Needs, Anti-Bullying Policy, Whistle Blowers Chart, Complaints Policy. The sanction policy stated that in many cases a rebuke would be satisfactory for the management of misbehaviour, and that a sanction form would not be necessary in all incidences, although it did detail that care must be taken to ensure that sanctions are recorded appropriately.

The policy reflected that sanctions and the regular use of sanctions was not the part of the ethos of the school, and it went on to detail what must be recorded in the event that a sanction was given. This was reflected by the fact that only four sanctions had been recorded since the last inspection. The logs were completed fully and contained details of the outcome; the standard 33 visitors and a member of the senior management team had countersigned all of these records.

A separate policy was also available on the practice guidelines for the use of sanctions within the residential department of Linden Bridge School. This document detailed the permissible sanctions which included, removal from group when in class, withdrawal of lunch or break privileges, detention within school time, withholding participation in school trips or events that are a non essential part of the curriculum, withdrawal from a lesson or peer group, extra work or carrying out an extra task.

94% of parents confirmed within their questionnaires that they had been advised of the school's rules, and 58% of parents responded that they were aware of the punishments used by the school. 41% of respondents stated that they felt that punishments were appropriate and fair.

Some parents stated that they tried to follow the same practice at home. Others stated that they were happy with the punishments used because pupils are rewarded for good behaviour rather than punished for poor behaviour.

Only two incidents of physical restraint had been logged since the last inspection. Incidents and restraint records were cross-referenced to the school's incident sheets that were held on children's files. Both incidents of

restraint were used to keep pupils safe, and were appropriate to the situation. The log had again been completed fully and had been countersigned by the standard 33 visitors and a member of the senior management team.

The school used positive options as a method of behaviour management and physical restraint, and all staff had completed this training.

The school held a detailed policy with regard to the methods of care and control, which began with a section on Understanding and Managing the Challenging and Unwanted Behaviour of their Pupils, the schools expectations with regard to behaviour and how this is agreed and monitored within the children's records, including meetings with parents.

The school used a range of approaches and teaching strategies to reduce anxiety and unwanted behaviour, which included the use of TEACCH, PECS and positive options, as well as the use of positive reinforcement and rewards.

The policy further detailed what the response to unwanted behaviour should be, which included a chart of how to respond to certain levels of behaviour. The school's policy is to train staff in the use of positive options as a method of physical restraint.

The school used behaviour management plans that were agreed with parents, in addition to physical intervention plans, which ensured that members of staff had clarity about how a pupil will be supported through an incident where physical intervention may be required.

A separate physical intervention policy was available that detailed when the use of physical intervention would be most defensible, which included when children may be at risk of injuring themselves or others, self-injury, damage to property, and when behaviour may be prejudicial to good order and discipline. A number of risk assessments were used within the school with regard to the appropriate use of physical restraint. The policy was very clear about the exact techniques to be used i.e. breakaway techniques, disengagement skills, and holding skills to be used. The policy also included detailed references from research and legislation. This was supported by the positive options handbook held by the school.

Records of sanctions and physical intervention were also held on the pupil's file.

The school exceeded this standard.

Personnel records were neat and orderly and the files for the most recently recruited members of staff sampled during the inspection contained evidence the original certificates and evidence of identification had been seen during interview, and that two written references had been obtained and followed up

by telephone. List 99 checks had been completed on both members of staff, and applications had been made for enhanced CRB checks. The CRB disclosure for one member of staff had been received prior to them commencing work, however following delays the second member of staff had commenced work without the CRB check having been returned. The school had taken the decision based on a detailed risk assessment, so as to ensure that one boarding unit could remain open. The member of staff was receiving daily one-to-one supervision and never worked unsupervised with the pupils. They were also only able to work with pupils over 16 years of age. Evidence was available to demonstrate that both the school and the member of staff had chased up the CRB check.

The school uses an approved other body which is a part of Surrey County Council to undertake CRB checks. The offices of this body were inspected earlier in the year by CRB. There was some concern regarding the lack of responsibility that Head Teachers retained in deciding whether an applicant's CRB was satisfactory for them to work at the school. This matter is being discussed with Surrey County Council and following a resolution to the discussions recommendations may be made by the CSCI.

Although the inspectors appreciated the difficult situation that the school and member of staff were in following the delay in receipt of the CRB check, the school must ensure that these are in place before staff commence employment.

At the time of the inspection there was no evidence of significant unnecessary hazards to health and safety of the children or staff. The school has a Health and Safety policy that is available to all staff.

Risk assessments were evidenced for leisure activities and the school premises, which included the use of computers, swimming pool, sensory room, cooking, gymnasium and playground equipment. The school had recently begun using their new swimming pool. The inspector viewed evidence of 'Normal Operations Procedure' and 'Emergency Operations Procedure'. These provide information in regard to the safe use of the swimming pool, including specification of staffing ratios and the use of qualified staff whilst in the swimming pool. The school is advised to obtain a copy of the Health and Safety Executive pamphlet in regard to the use of school swimming pools to ensure regulations are followed.

The fire risk assessments for the school were viewed; these were dated April 2005. Evidence of weekly testing on fire call points was observed, as were the regular testing of all other fire detection appliances. The emergency lighting had been replaced on the 6th June 2006. The fire extinguishers were last serviced in June 2005. The last recorded fire evacuation was 25th May 2006. Children and staff were conversant with the emergency evacuation routine,

and posters giving clear instructions on the evacuation procedure were displayed throughout the school.

Termly health and safety checks were conducted by the head of care and a representative from the board of Governors. Recorded evidence of these was viewed during the inspection.

Evidence of annual servicing of the gas installations certificates were viewed, this was undertaken on the 2nd June 2006. Portable electrical appliance testing had been undertaken.

The head of care maintains weekly records of the temperature of hot water outlets; these were evidenced during the inspection.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

12,22

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The school's ethos ensures that pupil's individual needs are identified and met. The promotion of educational progress is paramount within the schools 24-hour curriculum.

EVIDENCE:

The ethos of the school is to focus upon the pupil's individual needs in relation to their autistic spectrum disorder. Care plans reflect the individual needs of the child, and each pupil had safe from harm risk assessments. Although, one questionnaire received from parents stated that they did not feel that their child had an individualised plan.

Policies and procedures with regard to behaviour management identified that the school involved the child, relevant school staff, and the parents in the development of any individualised behaviour management programme. This was confirmed by responses to parental questionnaires.

Specialist communication systems were used throughout the school including Makaton sign language, Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS) and structured environment timetables and programmes (TEACCH). Pictures and symbols were used throughout the school as prompts and cues, and signs were written in "see-read" to assist the pupils. Older pupils who no longer required the visual cues had written tick charts to ensure that they were supported through their daily routines.

Speech and Language specialists were available within the school.

The school had a specific policy with regard to the support of a child who may have been abused.

Independent listeners were identified.

In the main personal, health, social and sex education were dealt with as part of the curriculum in PSHE, however the inspectors were aware that staff knew when these topics were being discussed so they could be prepared to deal with any questions that may arise during the boarding time.

There was evidence that relevant information with regard to personal, health and education are shared with the relevant people, including with parents. Home-school books were used, and home-school agreements were in place. Parents also confirmed within their questionnaires that the boarding staff would telephone them and keep them up to date with their child's activities, behaviour and routine during their boarding time.

A large number of parents stated within their responses to questionnaires that the school had supported their children to improve their social skills, and relationships. The responses also identified that independence skills were promoted, and pupils are supported to attend social activities, however one parent was concerned that pupils who are more able are left to be too independent.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

2,17,20

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The ethos of the school promotes and encourages children to make decisions and choices about their lives and the way the school is run. The school's care planning exceeds the standards. Contact with parents and carers is promoted.

EVIDENCE:

Pupils at the school may find it challenging or overwhelming to make free choices, because of their specific needs. The school uses cues and pictures, and structured programmes, for example TEACCH and PECS to support pupils to make appropriate choices.

Timetabled "choice" activities were arranged as part of the evening routines. Staff were observed supporting pupils to make choices about snacks, meals and activities throughout the inspection.

There was also evidence throughout the school's documents that showed how pupils and parents or carers had been consulted about the daily routines, policies and procedures, and care and education planning.

Minutes from the school council were displayed in the entrance to the school, and these evidenced how pupils were able to make requests and comments

about activities, events and about the school in general, and that these were listened to.

The inspectors observed staff talking to pupils, and taking time to listen to what they wished to say without interruption.

Specialist communication systems are used throughout the school and the inspectors observed pupils being taught and prompted to use these systems throughout the school.

A range of records were used to make up pupils records. Three pupil records were sampled during the inspection.

All pupils files sampled contained a Statement of SEN; however in addition to this children had a care plan form, risk assessments and medical forms. Each child had a key worker, and there was evidence in some cases of consultation with parents and the pupils with regard to the records, IEP, care plan and risk assessments. IEP's contained a transition plan where appropriate.

Staff confirmed that they were able to attend statutory reviews and were part of the child's IEP review. Older pupils were always involved in their reviews all other children were asked about their opinions and comments prior to the meetings. Annual reviews were taking place on the day of the inspection, and staff were attending where appropriate.

Pupils have a link worker, who was responsible for attending the child's review and for writing their care plan assessment form. Care plan assessment forms were found to be well maintained and evidence was available that they were kept under review. At the time of the inspection any changes to the care plan were made in a different colour, which assisted anybody reading the plan to identify where needs had changed or developments had been made.

Care plan assessment forms were detailed documents that covered self care skills, identity, family and social relationships, communication and behaviour, relationship with others, anxieties and worries, working with parents, social presentation, and work and recreation. Children's specific cultural, ethical and religious needs were identified within these documents.

This standard was exceeded.

Children are supported to maintain contact with their parents and carers when they stay at the school. Home/school books are used routinely, and staff stated that they were essential.

Parents are encouraged to visit the school, and can telephone at anytime. Older pupils who do not need support to use the telephone have free access to

a communal telephone, although guidelines are given to them with regard to appropriate use.

Staff members confirmed that where a private room is requested for a meeting between pupils and visitors, this could be facilitated.

The school held a policy with regard to working with families and carers.

11% of parents stated that they felt that there should be more communication with parents, and that communication should be more "explicit". Although all other parents felt that the school consulted them or kept them informed. Some parents stated that keeping parents informed was the best thing about the school.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

None of these standards were assessed at this inspection.

EVIDENCE:

Management

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

1, 28,31,32

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The school had a detailed statement of purpose.

Sufficient competent staff are available to support the pupils.

EVIDENCE:

The school had a statement of purpose available, and boarding pupils had created a CD-Rom video of what it was like to be a boarder at the school. The pupils should be commended for this video that was bright, friendly and covered important subjects such as it being "ok" to be a little bit homesick, because there were always adults available, and how PECS boards and timetables were used to let boarders know what activities were going to take place.

At the time of the inspection boarders got to know what boarding is like through introductory visits with staff.

The care staff team consisted of the head of care, two senior care workers, four residential childcare officers, one part time childcare officer, one domestic and six waking night staff. At the time of the inspection the school had recruited a senior childcare officer, and were waiting the outcome of the Criminal Record Bureau clearance for this person.

The care staff, including the head of care and senior staff, work a split shift duty system from Monday to Friday. Two waking night staff work Monday to Thursday nights in the residential provision catering for school-aged children, whilst one waking night staff and a sleep person cover the night duties in the further education department. Staff records evidenced care staff had received their stated hours of duty.

During the evening, staff were observed to work with the children in a professional and respectful manner, allowing the children time to make choices, make decisions and act for themselves. Staff had knowledge of each child's needs, and attended to these accordingly. Throughout the evening staff were observed to be encouraging and supporting children.

The overarching feeling from parents' responses was that the staff team were "caring", "committed" and "skilled".

Parents stated that the boarding staff were "thoughtful about the strategies that they use with the pupils", and that they are "very committed and pay attention to detail".

Parents felt that the atmosphere in the school was always happy, and the environment was good. 17% of parents actually stated that one of the worst things about boarding was that they could not have more than two nights per week.

Parents commented on the recent changes in staffing, and there was a concern that one pupil had their key worker changed three times in twelve months. The school would be advised to review how key workers are allocated in order to ensure that where possible consistency is maintained.

The school had a staffing policy that incorporates the arrangements for supervision of children, and clearly states the shift patterns all care staff are to work. Time is provided for supervision and annual appraisals.

The head of care stated that records of sickness are low, however, when this did occur, absences are covered by volunteers from within the school. Agency staff were not used in the care provision.

The school maintained written records of which children and adults are sleeping in each of the residential units.

The school had been on course to achieving 80% of the care team qualified in NVQ Level 3; unfortunately two members of the team had recently left the employment of the school. The head of care held the NVQ Level 4 and the Registered Managers Award, one member of staff held the NVQ Level 3, and two other care staff were currently undertaking NVQ Level 3 training.

Training records viewed evidenced that, with the exception of one member of staff, care staff had received training in Child Protection, positive options, the management and administration of medication and first aid.

Boarding staff stated that they had not received recent training with regard to autistic spectrum disorders. The inspectors were advised by the head teacher and the Head of Care that this training was to be given as part of the September INSET training day. The inspectors would strongly support this, and would advise the school to include regular update training as part of the annual INSET training programme for all staff.

82% of parents who responded to questionnaires stated that the staff at the school did a great job, with a further 17% stating that the staff did quite well or were ok most of the time. Nobody considered the staff to do a bad job.

During discussions, the domestic member of staff stated that they had received training in regard to Care Of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) and Health and Safety.

The school had an annual development plan for the year 2005/2006, which included further development of the premises, main school site, sensory room and the conversion of a kitchen to a second playroom.

There was a School Improvement Plan in place for 2004 to 2007.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

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

“N/A” in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
Standard No	Score
14	3
15	X

STAYING SAFE	
Standard No	Score
3	3
4	3
5	3
6	4
7	X
8	3
10	4
26	2
27	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
Standard No	Score
12	3
13	X
22	3

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
Standard No	Score
2	3
9	X
11	X
17	3
20	3

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
Standard No	Score
16	X
21	X
23	X
24	X
25	X

MANAGEMENT	
Standard No	Score
1	3
18	X
19	X
28	3
29	X
30	X
31	3
32	3
33	X

No

Are there any outstanding recommendations from the last inspection?

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

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

No.	Standard	Recommendation	Timescale for action (Serious welfare concerns only)
1.	RS27	The school must ensure that these are in place before staff commence employment.	20/07/06

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