

inspection report

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

Doucecroft School

163 High Street

Kelvedon

Colchester

Essex

CO5 9JA

11th, 12th & 13th 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

Doucecroft School

Address

163 High Street, Kelvedon, Colchester, Essex, CO5 9JA

Tel No:

01376 570060

Fax No:

01376 570060

Email Address:

info@essexautistic.org.uk

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

The Essex Autistic Society

Name of Head

Ms Kathy Cranmer

CSCI Classification

Residential Special School

Type of school

Residential Special
School

Date of last boarding welfare inspection:

19/01/04

Date of Inspection Visit		11th October 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of CSCI Inspector	1	Jenny Elliott	076559
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		Ms Kathy Cranmer	

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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 Doucecroft 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

Doucecroft School is an independent special school, owned and operated by the Essex Autistic Society, catering for children and young people with autism coupled with varying degrees of learning difficulty.

At the time of inspection the school was providing places for 20 boarding pupils aged between 8 and 19 years.

The main school is located in a large building, which has been extensively converted for its current use. Boarding pupils were accommodated on the first floor. The ground floor comprises classroom areas, kitchen and dining facilities and offices. There is an enclosed garden. A new, purpose-built school is in the process of construction and expected to open in September 2005.

The school's Further Education Department is situated within easy walking distance of the main school site. Accommodation is provided in single rooms. There is a large garden at the rear of the building with vegetable patches and fruit trees. At the time of inspection an outbuilding was nearing the completion stage of refurbishment providing additional teaching and meeting space.

The school is situated in the village of Kelvedon, with a number of community facilities nearby and convenient access to public transport and main road and rail links.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL IN BOARDING WELFARE

The school has a range of communication methods in daily use that enhance the input pupils have into their daily lives.

The school has a good level of communication with parents and professionals.

The school generally develops and implements good quality care plans.

Staff were observed responding in a consistent manner to less socially acceptable behaviours exhibited by pupils.

The school holds regular review meetings, outcomes from meetings are incorporated into care plans.

The school provides a range of activities for boarders within school and the community.

The school has good administrative records in respect of health and safety and the recruitment of staff.

The school's governing body take an active interest in the provision of services.

WHAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD DO BETTER IN BOARDING WELFARE

The school should continue to develop the understanding of staff in respect of dealing with complaints and supporting acceptable behaviours.

The school should improve its recording of sanctions and restraints.

The school should ensure that staff are aware of thresholds for the reporting of concerns.

The school should review and clarify the roles and responsibilities of the senior management team, and ensure that this group receive appropriate supervision.

CONCLUSIONS AND OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS ON BOARDING WELFARE

The school provides a caring environment for pupils. Evidence was seen of the schools continuing development in the areas of care planning, communication, staff development and supervision. Feedback from parents and social workers was very positive.

The premises at the main school restrict the service that can be provided. A purpose built new school is under construction on the outskirts of Colchester.

The school had addressed many issues from the last inspection report, staff were positive and co-operative throughout this inspection. Discussions with the senior management team were constructive and productive.

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:

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	
		Four recommended actions have been brought forward from the previous inspection and are highlighted in the following section.	

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	RS4	The school should ensure that the complaints policy and procedural guidance includes all the areas specified in NMS 4.3 and that, following this development, training in the new procedures is provided for staff in line with the expectations of NMS 4.4. This requirement has been bought forward from the last two inspections.	31/07/05
2	RS5	The school should ensure that staff are aware of thresholds for reporting child protection concerns to the designated person.	31/01/05
3	RS9	The school should ensure that responses to positive behaviour are consistently applied.	31/03/05
4	RS32RS33 RS5RS10	The school should ensure that all sanctions and physical restrictions are recorded and reviewed by the Head and governing body. This requirement has been bought forward from the previous inspection.	31/01/05
5	RS10	The school should develop a behaviour management policy.	31/03/05
6	RS23	The school should ensure that standards of decoration are maintained across both sites.	31/07/05
7	RS26	The school should continue to take steps to ensure risk associated with the locking of external doors is clearly recorded and regularly reviewed.	30/11/04

8	RS29	The school should ensure that staff have training dealing with complaints, managing behaviour and child protection thresholds.	31/03/05
9	RS31RS30	The school should ensure that supervision is in place for all staff. This requirement has been bought forward from the previous inspection.	31/03/05
10	RS32RS31	The school should review and clarify the roles and responsibilities of the senior management team to ensure it delivers the best possible care. This requirement has been bought forward from the previous inspection.	31/01/05

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	RS15	The school should consider how it can offer a choice of meals to students at the FE unit.

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	NO
• School Doctor	YES
• Independent Person	NO
• Chair of Governors	YES

Tracking individual welfare arrangements	YES
Survey / individual discussions with boarders	NO
Group discussions with boarders	NO
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)	NO
Answer-phone line for pupil/staff comments	NO

Date of Inspection	11/10/04
Time of Inspection	10:00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs.)	24
Number of Inspector Days spent on site	3

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?	3
The statement of purpose provided by the school meets the minimum requirements of this standard. The statement of purpose describes the main school and further education department as one school, this view was not reflected in discussions with staff outside of the senior management team.		

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?

3

Ten parents returned completed questionnaires. All respondents said they felt the school were good at letting them know about things that happened to their child and that they were consulted before big decisions were made. Questionnaires were also received from social workers in respect of four pupils, each of these stated that they were notified of significant affects affecting the pupil.

The school accommodates children and young people with a wide range of communication methods. Staff demonstrated, through discussion, a good understanding of the behaviours of pupils and described how these could be interpreted as pupils' wishes. The school gathers a wide range of information about pupils before admission and throughout their school career. This information was used to inform care plans.

A range of communication methods were in daily use during the inspection, and seen to be used in a consistent manner by different staff. The range of methods encouraged the development of communication skills as well as providing the opportunity for pupils to make basic choices.

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?

3

Since the last inspection the school had developed guidance for staff providing personal care that promoted the privacy and dignity of pupils. Staff spoken to demonstrated a good understanding of this guidance.

It was felt that the minimum requirements of this standard had been met.

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 information in respect of complaints had not been updated from the previous inspection. Eight parents, through questionnaires, said they had received information from the school about how to make a complaint, but only one person said they had been told how to make a complaint to an Inspector. Two of the four questionnaires received from social workers stated that information about the school's complaints procedure had been provided.

The needs of pupils and the range of communication methods used by them, makes the issue of complaints very complicated and demands a high level of awareness from staff. This is particularly difficult in an environment that promotes the acquisition of more socially acceptable behaviours. However, a high level of recording in respect of the behaviours of pupils is maintained at the school, providing an opportunity for patterns to be identified and, potentially, dissatisfaction, subject to the skills and experience of staff.

The school recognises the need to produce a more child friendly complaints procedure and was working on this at the time of inspection.

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

Number of above complaints substantiated:

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

Number of above complaints substantiated:

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?

1

The school had updated its child protection policy in February 2004. The policy addresses the points in Appendix A of the national minimum standards for residential special schools. All questionnaires received from social workers stated they felt children were safe at the school. The designated child protection officer reported good links with the child protection team.

Staff were working through NSPCC child protection training booklets.

The schools recording and reviewing of sanctions and restraints did not meet the requirement of these standards, and would not be robust enough to identify patterns of concern.

One of the pupil records tracked as part of this inspection, included notes referring to a bruise. This had not been referred to the designated child protection officer and therefore the schools child protection policy had not been implemented. This was brought to the attention of senior staff at the time of the inspection to ensure appropriate action could be taken.

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

0

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?**

3

It was felt that the minimum requirements of this standard continued to be met.

Percentage of pupils reporting never or hardly ever being bullied

X %

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?**

3

It was felt that the minimum requirements of this standard continued to be met.

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

0

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
It was felt that the minimum requirements of this standard were met.		
Number of recorded incidents of a child running away from the school over the past 12 months:		0

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?	2
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Parents completing questionnaires spoke highly about the staff at the school, many felt the quality of staff and the relationship between staff, pupils and parents was a significant strength of the school. This was also reflected in two of the questionnaires received from social workers.

Expectations, in respect of the behaviour of individual pupil's, was understood by all staff spoken with. Responses, to less acceptable behaviour, were observed to be consistently applied by different members of staff. Individual management plans, providing a précis of care plans, individual record sheets and information available to staff at mealtimes ensured staff were kept up to date with any changes.

Where pupils were responding well to their environment and exhibiting more socially acceptable behaviour, there was less consistency amongst staff in reinforcing this through praise.

At the further education unit, where most pupils had more developed communication methods, the interaction between staff and pupils at mealtimes was good.

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?****2**

Approaches to unacceptable behaviour, observed during the inspection were appropriate. (See also comments under standard 9 above). Parents and social workers, completing questionnaires, said they felt the rules and sanctions in place at the school were fair.

There was no evidence of any idiosyncratic punishments in place at the school. The recording of sanctions did not meet the requirements of this standard. Staff completing questionnaires described a range of appropriate sanctions that could be used.

The schools policies in respect of physical intervention were in line with the requirements of this standard. There was no indication that physical interventions and restraints were excessively used within the school. There were, though, examples of extreme restraints used on a pupil no longer at the school. These had been recorded in the pupils' own records but not in a centrally held record. There was, therefore, no opportunity for the school to review incidence or patterns of incidents.

The school did not have a behaviour management policy in place at the time of inspection.

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?	3
<p>The school had developed a clearer understanding of the relationship between the main and further education department since the last inspection, although this was not fully understood by all staff. The school had begun to develop and implement clearer transition plans for pupils moving from one site to another. The school had plans to develop this further once the refurbishment of the outbuilding at the further education unit was completed.</p> <p>The quality of information gathering and introduction to the school of new students was good.</p>		

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?**

3

It was felt that the school continues to meet the minimum requirements of this standard.

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 continues to provide opportunities for boarders to participate in a range of activities within and outside 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?**

3

The minimum requirements of this standard were met.

Where the school received medication for main carers in a manner that made it difficult for aspects of the standard to be met, evidence was seen of steps taken to address this.

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**

Food sampled during the inspection was served in adequate quantities and of adequate nutritional value. During the inspection two pupils were celebrating birthdays, steps were taken to celebrate this at mealtimes at both sites. A range of meals in respect of food type and presentation were prepared at the main site. At the FE unit pupils were actively involved in the preparation, serving and clearing up after meals helping individuals develop social and independent living skills. The level of social interaction at the FE unit at mealtimes was good. Staff had good ideas about how the dining environment at the FE unit could be further improved to reflect the age of students, e.g. place cards.

There was no choice of main meal at the FE unit other than meat or vegetarian option of the same dish. The unit is small and this obviously impacts on the range of choices that can be made available. The FE unit had prepared a paper highlighting the difficulties relating to food experienced by some students with autistic spectrum disorder. The FE unit does ensure that stated likes and dislikes are observed and each student's favourite meal is included in menus, whilst at the same time working with each pupil to increase the range of foods eaten. The FE unit should, though, continue to review how it can increase choices available in a manner that meets the needs of students.

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 continues to meet the minimum requirements of this standard.

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?

3

A range of papers and reports made up the individual care plans of each pupil. Those inspected were informative and easily accessible. Staff spoken to demonstrated a good understanding of the needs and aspirations of pupils as reflected by the paperwork inspected. Generally the care plans were felt to be of good quality.

There were two entries noted in two sets of records inspected that did not accurately reflect the situation regarding those students. These were brought to the attention of the school and quickly addressed.

As previously stated the level of recording in the school was high, ensuring up to date information was available for staff.

The school does not operate a Keyworker system, it was felt that this was satisfactory given the pupil group.

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?**

3

It was felt that the minimum requirements of this standard were met.

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

The school keeps the information described as a 'register' by the standard electronically. This information is regularly updated and 'backed-up' to ensure the validity and security of the information. It was felt that this met the requirements of this standard.

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?**

3

The minimum requirements of this standard continue to be met.

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

There were no pupils accommodated by the school at the time of the inspection who would be affected by this standard.

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?**

3

It was felt that the requirements of this standard were met (comments under nms 17 apply).

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?

2

The main school is an old building with teaching areas on the ground floor and residential accommodation on the first. The school has limited outdoor space. The school recognises the limitations of the existing building. A purpose built school is under construction and expected to be ready for the academic year beginning September 2005. Efforts had been made to improve existing facilities, particularly the flooring and decoration to shared spaces in the residential areas. The décor in some bedrooms was less satisfactory, with peeling wall paper and damaged paintwork noted.

The school had met again with the fire officer since the last inspection with regard to the locking of all external doors. The fire officer has stated that this would not normally be acceptable, but has taken no action reflecting pupils needs, the fact that all staff carry keys and keys are kept adjacent to each door, and that the school will not be used after July 2005 in correspondence about the situation.

The FE department benefits from a smaller student group and more generous shared space. The refurbishment of an outbuilding providing an additional resource.

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?****2**

As stated in standard 23, a small number of bedrooms in the main school were in need of decoration. Some bedroom furnishing was also a little battered. However, the Commission is mindful of new premises and furnishings that will be available in September 2005.

Boarding accommodation at the FE unit met the requirements of this standard.

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?****3**

The minimum requirements of this standard were met.

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**

A range of health and safety checks are carried out and clearly recorded by the school. The Essex Autistic Society has a health and safety officer who carries out an audit three times a year. Certificates were seen in respect of the maintenance and servicing of equipment and services. The records held were good and demonstrated internally monitoring by the operating body.

The school does lock all external doors, which is a practice not usually acceptable to the fire officer. The school must continue to take steps to ensure that the risk associated with this practice is clearly records, regularly reviewed, and that all staff are clear about action to be taken in the event of a fire.

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

It was felt that the minimum requirements of this standard were met.

Total number of care staff:

28

Number of care staff who left in last 12 months:

X

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?**

3

It was felt the minimum requirements of this standard were met.

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?**

2

Staff described opportunities, provided by the school to develop their skills. The records inspected evidenced that a range of health and safety and care practice and communication training appropriate to the needs of pupils had been accessed in the proceeding 12 months.

In light of observations made during the inspection the school should consider providing training in respect of complaints and behaviour management (specifically promoting positive behaviour) and child protection thresholds.

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?**

2

The frequency of supervision for all staff (except caretaker and senior management team) was good. Supervision notes relating to two members of care staff were inspected. The notes did not always indicate that work with pupils, or in the case of team leaders, supervision of staff was addressed. The school is in the process of developing its supervision process, in consultation with staff, and these are areas that are being considered.

The school is undertaking a review of the responsibilities of the senior management team, including the provision of supervision.

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?

2

The school has yet to clarify roles and responsibilities for the senior management team as described in the last report.

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?

2

The situation described in the headline standard had not arisen.

The roles and responsibilities of the senior management team at the school is an issue that requires clarifying and impacts upon the monitoring of information required by this standard. The recording of sanctions and physical interventions requires improvement in order for monitoring required to be effectively undertaken.

The Head of Care had provided a report on residential provision for the year 2003/04.

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?****2**

The Governing body had carried out a number of visits to the school since the previous inspection. Visits had taken place at different times of the day and evening, some were unannounced. The reports of these visits were informative and provided qualitative information about the services provided.

The incomplete recording of sanctions and physical interventions means that the governing body were unable to monitor these effectively.

PART C**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY****(where applicable)****Lay Assessor** _____ **Signature** _____**Date** _____**Lead Inspector** Jenny Elliott **Signature** _____**Second Inspector** _____ **Signature** _____**Locality Manager** Paul Brewster **Signature** _____**Date** 17/01/2005 _____

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 11th, 12th and 13th 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

NO

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

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 15th 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: <enter details here>

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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