



Making Social Care  
Better for People

# inspection report

## RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

### North Hill House School

**Fromefield  
Frome  
Somerset  
BA11 2HB**

*Lead Inspector*  
Patricia Hellier

*Announced Inspection*  
28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> November and 1<sup>st</sup> December 2005 09:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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

<b>Name of school</b>	North Hill House School
<b>Address</b>	Fromefield Frome Somerset BA11 2HB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01373 466222
<b>Fax number</b>	01373 300374
<b>Email address</b>	sharone@nhh4as.co.uk
<b>Provider Web address</b>	
<b>Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school</b>	Farleigh Education Group
<b>Name of Head</b>	Andy Cobley
<b>Name of Head of Care</b>	Sharon Edney
<b>Age range of residential pupils</b>	7-18 years
<b>Date of last welfare inspection</b>	24 January 2005

## **Brief Description of the School:**

North Hill house opened in September 1999. The school is one of a number of school's owned by Priory Education Services. It is approved under section 347(1) of the Education Act 1996 for students aged 7-18 with Asperger's Syndrome. It is purpose built and set in its own safe grounds on the outskirts of Frome.

The school is specifically designed for boys with Asperger's Syndrome and for a number of boys who have other additional support needs.

The school provides a thirty-six week placement, and provides both residential and day care. The premises include 6 small residential areas as well as a range of specialist classrooms.

Outdoor facilities are on the small side at present, however there are plans for increasing this space.

In September 2005 two converted cottages in the town were opened to provide post 16 provision working towards independence as able for the students.

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# SUMMARY

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

This announced inspection took place over three days by two inspectors. Prior to the inspection information was received from the school via a pre inspection questionnaire, from parents of children who use the service, placing authorities and staff. Questionnaires from pupils were completed during the inspection through one to one discussions. The questionnaires were very positive from all groups. A small proportion of the staff felt a lack of support at times. All pupils were happy at the school and pupil staff relationships were observed to be built on mutual respect and understanding.

## **What the school does well:**

The inspectors had many opportunities to observe a very high standard of practice from staff, in relation to the care and support given to each young person resident at the school.

All staff observed and spoken with demonstrated evidence that they had a sound knowledge of the individual needs of young people. Good leadership, excellent communication, clear records and a high level of monitoring achieved good care planning and meeting of individual needs.

The residential areas were well maintained, clean and suitable for purpose. Each young person is offered a good degree of privacy and space.

The inspectors felt that good progress had been made in developing a more 'seamless' approach to the provision at North Hill House. Links between the care and education staff had grown, there was evidence that staff valued each other's roles, and that all staff actively promoted both educational and social needs.

## **What has improved since the last inspection?**

Young people now have access to a telephone, in a designated booth with doors for privacy.

The two 'time out' areas have been refurbished and one of them includes soft play materials and lighting. The other has a large blackboard for writing and drawing on. The young people had been invited to rename these areas but liked the use of 'Time Out' and wished it to stay the same. Many young people feel able to request 'time out' when difficulties arise.

The purchase of two cottages that have been renovated for the post 16 students who attend local colleges for further education. The units provide support and encouragement with life skills assisting independence as able.

Supervision practices have been improved with records and staff interviewed showing regular support both as new employees and on a continuing basis.

The dietician has visited and is currently reviewing the menus with the catering staff. A 'healthy eating' plan has been implemented for all meals and pupils stated they like it.

### **What they could do better:**

To include the effectiveness of sanctions in the logbook, thus assisting in ensuring meaningful sanctions are given to pupils whose behaviour necessitates these.

The provision of increased space for pupils to expend their excess energy. The inspectors were told that there are plans for developing a sports facility in the grounds.

Clear lines of responsibility for the maintenance of Health and Safety issues in all premises, to ensure safety of all residents and the maintenance of up to date fire risk assessments, testing of equipment and drills specifically within the post 16 provision. The school have informed the Commission of a full Fire risk assessment and drills since the inspection.

A review of the medication storage on "Ash" to ensure that all medicines are stored within the temperature range as specified by the manufacturer. The signing and dating of all records, to reflect accountability and good practice.

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](mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk) or by contacting your local CSCI office.

# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

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Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

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# Being Healthy

## The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

14,15

Children enjoy nutritious balanced meals and live in a healthy environment. Their health needs are fully identified and met; their welfare is safeguarded.

## EVIDENCE:

Files were examined and were found to contain health care plans and child health records together with full and clear information from other professionals. Particular health interventions were addressed and there were protocols for the behaviour management and specific activities that cause the pupils difficulty. Staff on duty were observed to be familiar with the health care needs of the children and young people and responded to their needs respectfully and sensitively. A number of specialist medical services are an integrated part of the school team providing advice, treatment and support to children needing these services. Pupils told the inspectors that staff 'are aware of their needs and help them through with difficult things'.

The school have developed and implemented a very good policy for the handling of medication in the school. All "Household" medication in the school is well recorded, although it is recommend that when tubes and tubs of cream are opened that they are then dedicated to a specific child. The receipt of all medication into the school and transfer of medication within the school is recorded. It was suggest that the number of different places that medicines are recorded could be reduced. All areas of the school have secure storage areas available that are well organised and tidy. The medication storage on "Ash" was found to be very warm, probably caused by exposed hot water pipes running through the room and no ventilation being available. A dedicated medicines fridge is available for the storage of medicines requiring refrigeration. A suitable form for the recording of the temperatures for this fridge was supplied. The school are in the process of developing risk assessments to encourage those students in the post 16 area to develop their skills in self management of medication.

Good evidence was seen and experienced of a balanced nutritious diet. The implementation of healthy eating has received a mixed response from the young people, although most acknowledged that it was good for them. The dining area is pleasant light and well ordered.

# Staying Safe

## The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

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

Children's privacy is respected and their welfare is promoted within a safe environment. Risks are assessed and well managed to ensure the safety of the young people. Complaint procedures are in place, well displayed and young people felt able to use them. Recruitment processes are robust and provide safeguards for the protection of the young people.

## EVIDENCE:

All records are normally kept locked away and staff demonstrated an awareness of the need to promote privacy and confidentiality. Inspectors saw behaviour management sheets in an area where they potentially could be seen others and breach confidentiality. When pointed out the school took immediate steps to hold them in a more secure place, whilst at the same time keeping them available to staff in order to manage difficult behaviours. A Child

Protection policy was available and staff interviewed said they had received training and knew what the policy said. Evidence was seen that Child Protection concerns had been acted on appropriately. A high level of supervision of the young people was observed, with staff seeking to be unobtrusive and sensitive in the process.

The complaints policy was well displayed and young people were aware of it. Young people and parents stated they felt able to approach the school staff with any concerns.

The school has a clear policy about bullying and young people are fully aware of it. Anti bullying posters are displayed and the inspectors were informed by the young people that there are regular group and individual discussions about bullying. Young people felt able to speak to staff if they were unhappy about the behaviour of other young people in the school.

Each young person had a behavioural management plan that had been devised in consultation with parents. The school has a clear policy; guidelines and training for staff in relation to the use of physical intervention should young people put themselves or others at significant risk. Regular staff meetings are held regularly and difficulties in managing behaviours discussed with parental views being included.

The school overall takes a proactive stance in promoting an environment that provides physical safety and security for the young people attending. The appointed person for co coordinating Health and Safety matters for the two sixth form houses, located a distance away from the school, was not aware that the sixth form houses had in fact been opened and were first occupied in September 2005. There was a Fire Risk assessment for these houses but did not include where detectors were sited and the fact that the premises were three storey and single staffed at night. There was no evidence that fire drills had taken place. The fire risk assessment, testing and drills were seen to be current at the main school. There had been some recent difficulties in maintenance programmes as the estates manager had left in July 2005 and the monitoring of systems and services had not had a designated person in place for three months.

Recruitment procedures are robust and all four files inspected contained the required documentation. All staff interviewed stated they had contracts of employment and job descriptions. Newly appointed staff confirmed they had completed an induction programme and evidence of this was seen in personnel files. The school provides mandatory and specialist training of which evidence was seen.

# Enjoying and Achieving

## The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

12,13,22

Children receive individual support as needed and are encouraged in their educational progress.

Children are able to pursue particular interests and are supported by staff to engage in leisure activities within the school and the local community.

## EVIDENCE:

Care and Education staff work well together and systems are in place to ensure that relevant information is handed over. Some staff were working in both and young people commented that greater continuity of care staff in the different areas would be beneficial. Young people said they feel well supported and encouraged, good examples of this were observed.

Young people are supported by their key workers and pastoral tutors, who provided the link between young person and family. Speech and language specialists and physiotherapists provided additional support.

Young people are encouraged to engage in a number of outside activities such as swimming and football. In the boarding area there are books, games, computers and televisions. Young people are encouraged to engage in activities in the local community e.g. scouts, judo classes. A minority of parents felt that the activities could be better at weekends, and that there more outside space would be beneficial for the young people. The Head Teacher said there were plans in place to build a sports hall in the forthcoming year.

# Making a Positive Contribution

## The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

2,9,11,17,20

Children are enabled and supported to make decisions about their lives. The school encourages young people to make a positive contribution to the running of the school.

Children's needs are comprehensively assessed and regularly reviewed in consultation with their social workers and families. Staff pupil relationships are based on honesty and respect.

Children are enabled to maintain contact with their families.

## EVIDENCE:

Feedback from parents was very positive and they felt that they are kept well informed. Good documentary evidence of this was seen. Parents felt that they are consulted and their view are incorporated in treatment programmes. Staff relationships with young people were observed to be professional, respectful and sensitive with appropriate boundaries in place. Each young person had a behaviour management plan that had been devised in relation to individual needs. The staff were very encouraging in their approach and clearly valued progress however slow, made by young people. One example was of a previously school phobic pupil who attended the Christmas disco.

Admissions to the school are planned and young people visit the school for an assessment prior to commencement at the school. Parents and pupils stated that clear written information is supplied to allow informed choices and

understanding of the school. The school has recently expanded to include provision for those young people who have moved into further education. North Hill House staff are providing support to six young people who are either attending college locally or in Trowbridge. The level of support varied according to needs.

Young people are supported in keeping in contact with families. Contact arrangements were recorded. Families felt that contact with the school was good and reported having had very frequent contact when needed as well as being involved with every aspect of their child's care. Parents reported being made to feel welcome at any time.

# Achieving Economic Wellbeing

## The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

16,21,23,24,25

The school is pleasant and spacious and maintained to a high standard in décor and all facilities.

Privacy and dignity are well respected by kind and caring staff.

Staff promote individuality and independence as able.

## EVIDENCE:

Young people encouraged to dress appropriately and were seen to be support in preparing clothes to wear for a Christmas disco. All young people are encouraged to manage small amounts of their own money and to make personal purchases when in the town, as needed.

The young people in the sixth form houses are undertaking further education courses and thus have some transitional links through this. The head teacher spoke of links with various education authorities and the school's link to a Connexions worker. No documentary reports or evidence of these links were seen.

The school is purpose built with the residential provision being sited at the back of the building and separated from the classrooms by corridors. Residential areas are broken down into 6 areas. Each area is similar and all areas appeared clean, modern and fit for purpose. The living area and



individual rooms are personalised and homely. CCTV is used to monitor the grounds for security reasons.

All young people accommodated have the use of a single bedroom with en-suite facilities consisting of a shower, toilet and wash hand basin. Staff and young people said that privacy and dignity was well respected

# Management

## The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

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

The head teacher and head of care give clear leadership and provide good management for the efficient running of the school. Parents know what to expect from the school and children receive good care from competent staff.

## EVIDENCE:

The home has a written Statement of Purpose that describes what it sets out to do for the children it accommodates. There is an adult and children's guide.

Clear progress and development plans were seen with targets set and contact details recorded and appropriate background information held. Staff demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of these plans.

Staff spoken with during the inspection said that they feel well supported by the Senior Managers at the school and by the support they receive from each other. There appeared to be systems in place for supervising staff, and staff

and records indicated regular supervision is being given. A small number of staff felt that they are not as well supported as they would like. Staff were clear about their lines of accountability and about whom they should report to.

Staff spoken with appeared satisfied with the training they had received and all staff stated they received regular training days at the beginning of each term covering mandatory topics and topics specific to young people with Asperger's syndrome. The training log was examined and this showed records of the above.

The inspectors found that there is an ethos of teamwork within the school, and staff reported being able to approach senior staff for advice or to share issues. Staff spoken to during the inspection appeared highly motivated and told the inspectors that they "love coming to work." There was evidence that school records had been monitored and signed and documentary evidence of an independent qualified individual to monitor these records and for the young people to speak with if they felt the need.

Evidence was seen showing monitoring and reviews of the care and educational aspects of the school undertaken by the Head teacher and deputy together with action plans that had been devised.

# SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

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

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

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

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>3</b>	3
<b>4</b>	3
<b>5</b>	3
<b>6</b>	3
<b>7</b>	3
<b>8</b>	3
<b>10</b>	3
<b>26</b>	2
<b>27</b>	3

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

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

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

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

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	RS14	It is recommended that the medication storage on "Ash" be reviewed to ensure that all medicines are stored within the temperature range as specified by the manufacturer.	
2	RS10	It is recommended that the effectiveness of sanctions are included in the logbook to assist in ensuring the meaningfulness of sanctions.	
3	RS13	It is recommended that increased outdoor space is provided to enable pupils to expend their excess energy.	
4	RS26	It is recommended that clear lines of responsibility for the maintenance of Health and Safety issues in all premises, to ensure safety of all residents and the maintenance of up to date fire risk assessments, testing of equipment and drills within the post 16 provision.	

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

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