



Champions for  
Social Care  
Improvement

# inspection report

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

## **Ashley School**

Ashley Downs

Lowestoft

Suffolk

NR32 4EU

3rd February 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.

<b>SCHOOL INFORMATION</b>
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**Name of School**

Ashley School

**Address**

Ashley Downes, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 4EU

**Tel No:**

01502 574847

**Fax No:**

01502 531920

**Email Address:**

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

Undefined Owner 01

**Name of Head**

**NCSC Classification**

Residential Special School

**Type of school**

**Date of last boarding welfare inspection:**

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		3rd February 2004	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		01:00 pm	
<b>Name of NCSC Inspector</b>	1	Joe Staines	077511
<b>Name of NCSC Inspector</b>	2		
<b>Name of NCSC Inspector</b>	3		
<b>Name of NCSC Inspector</b>	4		
<b>Name of Boarding Sector Specialist Inspector (if applicable):</b>			
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>			
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>			

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## INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Residential Special Schools are subject to inspection by the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) 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 NCSC in respect of Ashley 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

Ashley School is one of the two boarding schools (special) maintained by the Local Education Authority and has its own management committee. The school has a governing body under the arrangements of articles of government and manages its own finances through the Suffolk LMSS scheme. It is situated in North Lowestoft within a large housing estate. The buildings comprise several large, red brick villa type houses dating from the 1930's, arranged around a semi-circle. There have been recent additions for classroom, sports and dining facilities. There are extensive grounds to the rear of the buildings and an indoor swimming pool, heated all year round. Also available, are an adventure play area, soft play areas and 2 self-contained flats for the development of independence and life skills. The school appears well equipped and well maintained and provides throughout a warm and comfortable environment for pupils. There has been a noticeable shift in the prime needs of pupils who board at the school from moderate learning disability to emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school is continually reacting to this change a number of new developments and staff procedures have been put in place to ensure these needs are recognised within the staff team, and responded to appropriately.

## PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

### WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL IN BOARDING WELFARE

The feedback from the pupils, along with the comments made to the inspectors by staff, and observations whilst at the boarding houses, strongly suggests that the care staff are viewed as supportive by the pupils who board. Child protection, behaviour management and physical intervention policies at the school are both detailed and clear. Particularly, the Headteacher has played a central role in the development and implementation of the "schoolsafesafe" physical intervention policy. Records of care plans, policies, meetings and discussion with the Headteacher and head of care show that the school have developed a strong set of policies relating to the social care aspect of boarding at this school. The care planning process of visits by the head of care, followed by discussion with care staff, other family members and professionals have resulted in detailed plans which focus on identified needs and give a clear idea as to how the school intends to work with the person concerned. This, along with the strong community links forged by the school as a whole, as demonstrated in various joint projects with the community and other schools, leads to a positive boarding experience for those who may find it difficult to find such a level of understanding and support in other areas of their lives.

## WHAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD DO BETTER IN BOARDING WELFARE

As identified in the main body of this report, some anomalies were identified in the medication records and it has been recommended that the school reviews its policies and procedures for the receipt, storage and administration of medicines. Other than this, the school has demonstrated that it has an ongoing development programme, which is likely to address any issues relating to boarding welfare.

## CONCLUSIONS AND OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS ON BOARDING WELFARE

This was the second formal inspection of Ashley School under the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools. The evidence obtained during the inspection confirms that the school continues to provide care of a high level of quality and professionalism to pupils with a wide range of needs, including some that are complex and challenging. The family and group work undertaken by care, and other school staff provides a good level of therapeutic intervention which benefits both pupils at the school and their parents/carers outside the school. The school's policies and procedures ensure children's rights are protected and child protection matters are dealt with in line with local Area Child protection Committee protocols. The head is a member of the local child protection committee and the head of care takes a leading role in the increasing number of pupils who are on the child protection register, and/or looked after by the Local Authority. It is clear that the changing needs of the boarders at the school has been recognised by the management group of the school. Pupil's feedback to inspectors was very positive in terms of the relationship between them and care staff. Care plans demonstrate that individual pupils' needs are regularly monitored and plans are put in place to ensure that pupils have the opportunity to develop, according to their own needs and abilities. Records demonstrate that care staff have clear guidelines for the work they do. Communication about the needs of boarders takes place frequently, with daily handovers, and weekly development meetings taking place. Training is provided to care staff both internally, as part of the INSET programme, and externally, in the case of NVQ, child protection, and other courses identified as relevant to specific areas of work being undertaken by the member of staff concerned, such as sports or group work. The School continues to work closely to the National minimum Standards, using them as a training tool, and focusing some of their development on areas identified in the standards.

**NOTIFICATIONS TO LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY OR SECRETARY OF STATE**

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

NO

**Notification to be made to:**                      **Local Education Authority  
Secretary of State**

NO

NO

**The grounds for any Notification to be made are:**

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**IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FROM LAST INSPECTION**

Recommended Actions from the last Inspection visit fully implemented?

NO

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

No	Standard	Recommended actions	
1	RS33	It is recommended that the LEA identify a suitable person to visit the school, and report to them as identified in standard 33.	28/5/04



## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS IDENTIFIED FROM THIS INSPECTION

**Action Plan: The Head is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how recommended action and any advisory recommendations 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	RS14	It is recommended that the school undertakes a review of it's policies and procedures for the receipt, storage and administration of medicines.	28/5/04

### ADVISORY RECOMMENDATIONS

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

No	Refer to Standard*	Recommendation

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

**PART B****INSPECTION METHODS AND FINDINGS**

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

Direct Observation	NO
Pupil Guided Tour of Accommodation	YES
Pupil Guided Tour of Recreational Areas	YES

Checks with other Organisations

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

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

Date of Inspection	03/02/04
Time of Inspection	09:00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs.)	27
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 NCSC 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
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This standard is assessed as met. The school produces a whole school brochure every year and a separate statement of purpose of residence. There are also two handbooks on residence, one for pupils and one for parents. The handbook for pupils is personalised to each pupil with digital photographs of the pupil on the front page. These handbooks were seen in pupils' care plan documents.

## 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
<p>This standard is assessed as met. The inspectors saw evidence on pupils' files of discussion around daily life and ongoing needs. Pupils are routinely invited to reviews.</p>		

### 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
<p>This standard is assessed as met. Feedback from pupils gained throughout the inspection indicated that privacy is well maintained at the school. The school's toilet and showering facilities provide sufficient private areas and each pupil has a lockable space available to them within the boarding houses.</p>		
<p>During the course of the inspection the inspectors received feedback from pupils that the school prohibited the lending and borrowing of items between pupils, and that incidents of theft were rare.</p>		

**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?**

3

This standard is assessed as met. The school has a clear complaints procedure. Leaflets containing relevant information are displayed in both boarding houses. Each house has a telephone with relevant numbers, including childline and the NCSC, programmed in to a single number. Separate guidance is produced for staff to assist them with dealing with a complaint. The school employs an independent listener who is available for consultation with pupils who request this service.

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

**Number of above complaints substantiated:**

**Number of complaints received by NCSC 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?

4

This standard has been assessed as exceeded. The head teacher, deputy head, and head of care have all undertaken external training in child protection. School staff also receive regular updates in child protection at INSET dates. The school's internal child protection procedures fully comply with the National Minimum Standards, and include additional information and guidance around why children with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to abuse. The policy and procedures include detailed information which is designed to assist staff in understanding and identifying signs of abuse, plus clear information and referral forms that also assist staff in responding promptly and in accordance with the procedure, to any concerns or allegations of abuse. Interviews with the care staff confirmed that child protection issues are regularly discussed at the Friday Care meetings. The inspector went through a scenario with care staff, who demonstrated in their response, that they had a good understanding of child protection reporting and recording procedures. There was no evidence of any failure to meet any of the standards in this section.

The head teacher is in the forefront of the local Child protection committee, and has been involved in the development of local practice in this area. At any given time there are a number of pupils in residence at the school who are on the child protection register. Records seen at the inspection confirm that the head of care regularly attends core group meetings and case conferences.

**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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
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This standard is assessed as met. The school has an effective anti bullying policy, which contains all the information required by the National Minimum Standards. The head reported that the policy is 2 years old, and is due for review. There is an anti bullying group, run by the care staff, which encourages pupils to discuss the causes of, effects, and how pupils can tackle bullying. The bullying group is complemented by a number of other, self esteem related projects which help to promote an atmosphere where bullying is not prevalent, and pupils can be empowered to respond to bullying positively.

The inspectors engaged pupils in structured discussion around the subject of bullying. Pupils reported that, whilst bullying did on occasions occur, incidents were less than expected, and staff responded to known incidents.

<b>Percentage of pupils reporting never or hardly ever being bullied</b>	<b>80 %</b>
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**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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
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This standard is assessed as met. The school has a policy for the reporting of notifiable events. No notifications were required to be made since the last welfare inspection.

**NUMBER OF THE FOLLOWING NOTIFIED TO NCSC DURING THE LAST 12 MONTHS:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| • <b>conduct by member of staff indicating unsuitability to work with children</b> | 0 |
| • <b>serious harm to a child</b>   | 0 |
| • <b>serious illness or accident of a child</b>                                    | 0 |
| • <b>serious incident requiring police to be called</b>                            | 0 |



<b>Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.9)</b>		
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.		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>4</b>
<p>This standard is assessed as exceeded. No evidence was obtained which resulted in failure to meet any of the sections of this standard. The school has an effective policy on absconding, including risk factors, action to be taken following the completion of risk assessments and action to be taken following an incident of absconding. Records which enable senior staff to monitor incidents of absconding, with appropriate action following.</p> <p>The school has undertaken some innovative work with pupils who find it extremely difficult to attend school. This includes the link provision, where pupils can spend time in the residential accommodation, attending groups, and getting staff support, without sleeping over at the school. The school has recently set up a multi agency provision, the “one stop shop” which is being used to support particularly vulnerable young people, who may have great difficulty attending. Multi agency work is ongoing via the one stop shop, providing additional support, designed to achieve re-integration for young people who regularly remove themselves from school. This is a feature that has enabled the school to achieve improved results with pupils who have a history of non-attendance.</p>		
<b>Number of recorded incidents of a child running away from the school over the past 12 months:</b>		<b>0</b>

## CARE AND CONTROL

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

### Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
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This standard is assessed as exceeded. There was no evidence obtained at the inspection which indicated any failure to meet all of the sections of this standard. The evidence, obtained from observation, discussion with pupils and staff, plus examination of records, demonstrates that the relationships between care staff and pupils in residence were based on a mutually understood respect and professional boundaries were maintained at all times during the inspection. The group work undertaken by care staff demonstrates that the level of professionalism and the quality of care provided is of a high quality. Care staff were observed providing continual care to a group of boarders with varying needs and abilities, in a calm and professional manner. Pupils spoke positively about the care staff and the care they received at the school, an example of which is the comment made by one pupil, who stated that the staff “ask pupils what they want to do, they don’t just tell them”. The school has a keyworker system, and all of the pupils interviewed were aware of who their keyworker was, and their role. The inspectors found that all pupils received care and attention equally, according to need, and did not observe any signs of favouritism or antipathy toward any groups of pupils or individuals.

**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?**

4

This standard is assessed as exceeded. No evidence was obtained during the inspection that indicated a failure to meet any of the sections of this standard and evidence indicated that some of the schools practice was significantly better than that required in the National Minimum Standards. Despite being categorised as a school for children with moderate learning disabilities, and catering well for this group, the school continues to work with a number of young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties, and can present challenging behaviour. The levels of challenging behaviour have increased over recent years, and the staff team have had to develop systems and ways of working which appropriately respond to this challenge.

The school policies and procedures include regular developmental meetings for care staff, which include issues such as therapeutic work with children, young people with mental health problems, care planning, risk assessments, as well as daily briefings that include resident reviews and any behavioural issues. There is a whole school behaviour policy, which places safety and mutual respect between staff and pupils at its forefront. The policy includes a range of suggested actions for different types of behaviour. Rewards and certificates of achievement are used to encourage and recognise achievements of pupils. A number of personal plans are in place for pupils, as part of their care plans. All care staff have attended the "school safe" training in safe methods of control. A number of groups are run in each boarding house, some of which link in to the schools behaviour policy.

The school has created a behaviour support group, to undertake a comprehensive review of the whole issue of behaviour support, including case studies, feedback from staff about the issue, and a series of proposals about how the system can be enhanced. Early objectives have been raised at INSET training, which has increased staff's capacity to respond to behavioural issues. A review of the developments is due to take place within a month of implementation.

## 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
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This standard is assessed as met. Pupil files examined by the inspectors contained an induction checklist that confirms new admissions are properly supported. No pupils have leaving care plans, although there was evidence of an overall focus on independence aspects of the care provision, through independence groups, plans which focus on promoting independence for individual pupils, and the residential provision includes a semi independent flat, which enables some of the older pupils to experience a form of independent living. No emergency admissions have been made at the school since the last inspection.

**Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.7)**

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

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

4

This standard is assessed as exceeded. There was no evidence of a failure to comply with the minimum standards of this section. A number of educational activities are available to pupils in each of the boarding houses, including look and read computer use, and art work, as well as a number of educational books which were available at the time of the inspection.

The group work undertaken by care staff, includes independence groups, nurture groups, a healthy schools project and an anti bullying group, all of which provides a number of opportunities which go beyond the minimum level identified in the National Minimum Standards. All groups are regularly evaluated with involvement from a member of the schools management team. The school has also achieved a great deal of success in creating individual plans, based on non curricular based activities, for working with pupils who have been excluded from other schools, or have low rates of attendance, with positive results and improved attendance rates.

**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?**

4

This is an area in which the school performs particularly well. The range of activities available to boarders, both as part of the whole school provision, and within the residential houses includes, Art projects, swimming at the school swimming pool, membership of a local youth club, cycling proficiency, self defence, roller skating, keep fit, snooker at a local sports centre and numerous games and toys available in the boarding houses. The school also has a Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Risk assessments were seen for work experience, activities week, archery sessions and trips in the minibus. The risk assessments seen by the inspector included detailed information about the needs and abilities of pupils, including a range of identified issues which might have an impact on the activity.

**Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.25)**

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

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

2

This standard is assessed as not fully met. The school has recently achieved accreditation as part of the healthy schools programme. The school has a whole school health and safety policy, which refers to a number of other policies that go toward overall health care, including the administration of medicines, drug related incidents, sex and relationships, and risk assessment policy. The school has anti smoking information, specially designed for pupils with learning disabilities. The school has a comprehensive PHSE curriculum, which is enhanced by the residential programme that includes groups relating to health care issues, amongst other things.

The shortfall identified in relation to this standard is based around medication storage and administration procedures. Currently, medication is stored in a room in the administration block, and some medicines are distributed from here to the boarding houses, when necessary. A number of pupils are prescribed Ritalin, which is designated as a controlled drug, and dispensed by care and administrative staff, at varying times of the day and evening. Records are maintained of medicines administered, however the records of Ritalin did not always contain two signatures, and were not made in a bound ledger. Some dosages were omitted from the medication administration records and a recommendation has been made that the school review its procedures for the receipt, storage and administration of medicines, with reference to the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain publication: "The Administration and Control of Medicines in Care Homes and Children's Services".

The school has a written policy on the receipt and administration of household "non-prescription" medication, included in its overall medication policy.

**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

This standard is assessed as met. The feedback from boarders' was consistently positive, and included confirmation that choice was afforded to pupils. Menus demonstrate the diet offered is appropriate in terms of nutritional value, range and originality. One of the members of staff has responsibility for doing drop in visits to check the meals provided for quality, range and nutrition. The meals attended by the inspectors were taken with the rest of the school. The atmosphere in the dining room was calm and young people were not hurried in taking their meals. In the boarding houses, menus are completed on a weekly basis, with a variety of food available, including fresh fruit, drinks and snacks at all times.

**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

This standard is assessed as met. All the boarders were seen wearing their own clothes whilst in the boarding houses, and were able to express their individuality in their dress and appearance. Personal requisites are available to all boarders and can be stored individually for the owners' individual use. The school only offers weekly boarding and as such rarely look after boarder's money, however, on occasions pupils' money is looked after and the records seen by the inspectors were appropriately maintained.

## CARE PLANNING AND PLACEMENT PLAN

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

### Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
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This standard is assessed as exceeded. There was no evidence, obtained during the inspection that identified any failure to meet the minimum levels required by the National Minimum Standards. In addition the extent to which the plans were personalised, decorated, and seen by pupils as their own was evidence that the standard is exceeded. Pupils were keen to show the inspectors their files, and several were aware of, and positive about, the content of their plans, and what they hoped to achieve as a result of their being at the school. This demonstrates that the school has been effective in ensuring pupils know about, and contribute to their own plans. Care plans were viewed by the inspectors and found to contain detailed personal plans for each pupil, including individual targets and certificates of achievement. The head of care visits pupils once or preferably twice prior to admission, new pupils needs are discussed in care meetings and plans are produced on the basis of this, and other information provided by other professionals involved with prospective pupils and their families. All pupils that stay one night or more a week have an allocated keyworker. Individual keywork sessions are used to review individual plans and targets for each pupil.



**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

This standard is assessed as met. All of the files examined contained the information identified in the standards Personal information is kept securely in the school office. A separate file containing records of progress, plans, targets and accolades is kept at the boarding house. Daily records are made by care staff and signed whenever updated. The boarders concerned regularly see these records. As previously stated, on the day of the inspection, several pupils invited the inspectors to view their residential files, many of which had been personalised, demonstrating a sense of ownership of the file by the pupil concerned.

**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

This standard is assessed as met. The school keep their own records of each pupil placed at the school, which meets the requirements of the National Minimum Standards. Staff records held at the school contain the majority of information required by the National Minimum Standards, but copies of CRB certificates are not held at the school but at the personnel offices of the LEA. A list was provided to inspectors, detailing the names of staff who had satisfactory CRB clearance, held at the LEA personnel department and, Having consulted with colleagues in the National Care Standards Commission, it was the view of the inspector that this is satisfactory.

**Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.6)**

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

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

4

This standard is assessed as exceeded. No evidence was obtained during the course of the inspection which indicates a failure to meet any of the sections of this standard, and one area of development significantly exceeds the minimum. The inspectors observed family contact taking place during the inspection. Where contact needs to be supervised, records are kept of this. During the inspection, the inspectors had the opportunity to talk to two parents of pupils who boarded at the school. Both commented that the school was very good at keeping them informed of their child's progress at the school. The head of care reported that contact is maintained with parents every two weeks during term time, during which updates on their child's progress is given.

The area in which the standard is exceeded relates to a new development at the school. The school has opened a new, joint service provision called the "one stop shop". This service is a joint provision by health, education and social care, designed to offer free confidential advice to parents as well as speakers on subjects relevant to the needs of parents of children attending the school. Support groups are run, and information and support is available on a drop in basis for parents who are experiencing problems. The service also provides therapeutic support to pupils with individual difficulties, often of a complex nature. Several pupils who have experienced particularly difficult problems, such as exclusion, non attendance and behavioural problems have individual programmes of support, available in part via the one stop shop.

**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?**

3

This standard is assessed as met. There are no pupils in care who will be leaving care upon leaving the school. The school does however have a process for attending reviews of pupils who are in care and contribute fully to this process. The school has a close working relationship with the local authority, including termly meetings.

**Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.13)**

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

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

4

This standard is assessed as exceeded. There was no evidence obtained at the inspection of a failure to meet any of the sections of this standard. Pupils are able to undertake a variety of therapeutic group work, based on their individual needs and circumstances. Pupils reported consistently that the care staff were one of the best things about the school, and that they are able to contact a number of different staff members with personal problems if they need to. Records seen confirm that the school has useful links with other agencies such as health and social services. The school's PHSE programme provides useful links to welfare issues. There is an independent listener available to pupils who wish to speak to someone from outside the school about personal matters.

The area in which the work of the school exceeds the minimum standard is twofold. Firstly, all pupils at the school have individual identified needs. The assessment process of visits by the head of care, pre admission discussion at care meetings, and the care plans seen by the inspector demonstrate that individual needs and abilities are considered and responded to in each child's individual plans. These plans are regularly reviewed and adjusted in accordance with the pupil's concerned changing needs. The care staff demonstrated in discussion with the inspectors, and through inspector's observations during the inspection, an understanding of the needs of the pupils they care for. Secondly, as referred to earlier in this report, the school has recently opened a new service for pupils with specific, identified problems. The service is a joint project, involving staff from health and social services, as well as school staff. part of the project is a "nurture room" designed to enable children with significant emotional problems to develop emotional literacy and work with trained staff to address their own individual issues. This project has already been used to good effect with regard to pupils who have difficulty attending school, who have ongoing family problems, or managing their own behaviour.

## 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?

3

This standard is assessed as met. The school is situated close to all local amenities, and is easily accessible via public transport. The school does not normally accommodate pupils who require any special furniture, aids or adaptations; however, one pupil is visually impaired and has a writing board. The school does not provide full access to people with physical disabilities. This provision is not needed at present, although significant alterations will be required if the school intends to admit pupils with disabilities who require access.

### 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?

3

This standard is assessed as met. The inspectors were given pupil guided tours of both of the boarding houses, and found them to be clean, appropriately furnished and decorated, and well maintained. The accommodation is provided in two separate houses, one of which accommodates Boys aged 13-16, and one of which is separated internally between Boys aged 9-12 and Girls. Dormitories are internally laid out so as to provide as much private space as possible for each pupil, including a small workspace. Pupil numbers and ratio fall within those identified in the National Minimum Standards, although the maintenance of consistent even numbers is impossible due to the flexible nature of boarding at the school. Staff are always close to the boarding areas at night. Lighting and ventilation appeared adequate at the time of the inspection

**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

This standard is assessed as met. Each boarding house has a large shower and changing area and the design of these ensures that privacy is maintained. Bath/shower to pupil ratios are adequate. Locks are available on all toilets and bathrooms.

**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?**

3

This standard is assessed as met. The school had a new integrated fire alarm system installed in 2002. The board of governors has one member identified as having responsibility for health and safety matters. He conducts half termly walkabouts with the caretaker and the safety representative for the school, to identify any health and safety matters that require attention. The caretaker deals with minor issues; any major issues are referred to the governors via the head and deputy head of the school. The inspector interviewed the governor with responsibility for this task, who reported that recent developments includes a recommendation for the introduction of energy saving devices and practices throughout the school. Records were also seen which demonstrate that the school regularly undertakes fire evacuation drills, and tests on equipment and alarm systems.

## 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

This standard is assessed as met. Records held at the school demonstrate recruitment procedures include all the checks required by the standards. Records of CRB clearance are held at the LEA's personnel department and were faxed over to the school during the inspection.

**Total number of care staff:**

5

**Number of care staff who left in last 12 months:**

0

**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

This standard is assessed as met. The school has produced a staffing policy. The policy confirms that the staffing levels are sufficient in terms of number, in order to meet the needs of the boarders at the school. Pupils were able to identify a consistent staff team to the inspectors. The head of care has produced a formal staffing rota, which confirms the actual hours worked by care staff and includes where cover was required for sickness, training or annual leave. The staffing levels at Ashley school are a minimum of two care staff on duty at all times, plus a senior on call throughout the night, backing up sleeping in staff. Whilst the staffing levels are adequate, they are not over generous, bearing in mind the amount of extra therapeutic work undertaken by care staff and the range of activities undertaken as part of the working day.

**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?**

3

This standard is assessed as met. The school has taken an active role in training for all staff. The head has been involved in the development and implementation of the "schoolsafesafe" training programme for physical intervention with pupils. Care staff confirmed that they attend 5 professional development days per year. There is an induction training programme for new staff. This process has not been used for care staff since the arrival of the head of care in 2000, who went through the process. No new care staff have been employed since his arrival at the school. NVQ training for care staff is ongoing, with 1 member of staff having obtained the award, and 3 others in the process of doing so. The head teacher reporting that this has already begun to impact on the work undertaken with pupils at the school. Individual training is undertaken with regard to specific areas of work individual members of staff participate in e.g. sports. The worker with responsibilities for the one stop shop has attended relevant training.

**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?**

3

This standard is assessed as met. Care staff are supported on a daily basis by the head of care, deputy head and head teacher, who maintain a presence at the school every night on a rotational basis. These senior members of staff are on call and available to support staff should the need arise. Care staff confirmed supervision takes place regularly, and is viewed positively by the staff concerned. Staff appraisals are being put in place as part of the single status programme, operated by Suffolk County Council, which is a countywide review of staff job descriptions, salaries and conditions. Care staff reported that this process has been extremely difficult for them, and is not yet over, due to appeals being made in respect of decisions taken by the Council. However, the staff team reported that the head has been extremely open and supportive to them during the process. The Headteacher receives his appraisal from an externally employed consultant. Termly Headteachers reports also form an important part of the governors meeting. The head of care receives supervision from the head half termly, and attends the senior management team meetings fortnightly. Ancillary staff working in the domestic and catering aside of the schools operation are supported by the external provider responsible for each of these areas.



## ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

### Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.17)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

#### Standard met?

4

This standard is assessed as exceeded. There was no evidence found by the inspector of a failure to meet any of the sections of this standard. The head of care has achieved the qualifications required by the national minimum standards. He also has more than the minimum amount of experience required. The investment made by the Headteacher and the head of care in the care element of the boarding experience at the school is a positive indicator of the importance placed on this area of provision. It is clear from the feedback of the Headteacher and head of care, along with the care plans and observations of the school, that there has been a shift in the primary needs of pupils attending the school from moderate learning disability to emotional and behavioural problems. It is to the credit of the school that this change has been acknowledged, and appropriate investment has been made into the policies, practices and arrangements for the pupil and staff group. Discussion with care staff, the head of care and the head teacher clearly indicate that a number of new initiatives have been brought in since the appointment of the head of care. Care staff reported that the developments have made their job more worthwhile and rewarding as they can see the impact of their work on the pupils at the school.

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

40 %

**Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.5)**

The National Care Standards Commission 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?**

0

This is a LEA maintained school and, as such, the standard does not apply.

**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

This standard is not fully met, as the LEA has not identified the appropriate person to undertake this task. The school are waiting for the LEA to decide whether the board of governors will take on this role, or others identified by the LEA. The National Care Standards Commission has written to the LEA to ask them to identify a person to undertake these visits on their behalf with no response. Another letter will be sent with this report, advising the LEA of the minimum standards and of their failure to comply. The person who undertakes the visits cannot be someone who works at, or directly manages the school, and written reports should cover the areas identified in standard 33.3.

However, the head reported to the inspector that the governors do visit regularly and the visits are helpful, although no records are maintained of these visits.

**PART C**

**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY**

**(where applicable)**

Empty box for Lay Assessor's Summary.

**Lay Assessor** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**PART D**

**HEAD'S RESPONSE**

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

Comments were received from the provider

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 27<sup>th</sup> May 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

Action plan was received at the point of publication

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 Ashley School 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 Ashley School 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.**