



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

Ratcliffe School

**John Nash Drive
Dawlish
Devon
EX7 9RZ**

Lead Inspector
Jennifer Reed

Announced Inspection
3rd July 2006 08:45

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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

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

Those outcomes are:

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

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

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

SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of school	Ratcliffe School
Address	John Nash Drive Dawlish Devon EX7 9RZ
Telephone number	(01626) 862939
Fax number	01626 888101
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school	Devon County Council Education Dept.
Name of Head	Mrs Cherie White
Name of Head of Care	Mr R. D. Furnivall
Age range of residential pupils	8 – 16 years
Date of last welfare inspection	9 th January 2006

Brief Description of the School:

Ratcliffe School is situated in woodlands in the seaside town of Dawlish. It is a Devon County Local Education Authority school designated for children, aged from 8 to 16 years of age, of mixed gender, who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school is now taking children with an increasingly complex range of needs. Some children are in local authority care arrangements. There are currently 38 children who board at the school; the majority of children are of White British origin. Boarding resources are used flexibly, including offering an extended day or occasional overnight stays for those day pupils who would benefit from staying for tea and evening activities.

The 5 residential accommodation buildings are adjacent to the main school building. The houses are named Dart, Otter, Culm, Exe and Tavy. Exe provides accommodation for girls; the other houses accommodate boys only. (Tamar house is currently not used and is planned to be out of commission for the next academic year). The school has a close circuit surveillance system in place.

The school has pleasant grounds of approximately 10 acres, offering the opportunities for nature walks, and providing hard and soft play areas. The school has set up its own youth club, which is held in a separate building in the grounds.

SUMMARY

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

This inspection was arranged with the school for the 3rd to the 5th July 2006. Two inspectors came to the school and talked with the children, the care and teaching staff, the Principal, Mrs White, the Chair of the Governors, Ms Bruton, and also with the staff who do the cooking, cleaning and repairs. The inspectors looked at the houses and grounds, saw how care staff looked after children, ate meals with the children in the school and in the houses, went to staff meetings and checked the paperwork

Parents were sent questionnaires to find out what they thought about how well children were looked after by the school; 14 parents sent these forms back to the inspectors. The inspectors also asked the local safeguarding manager, the Fire Service, Environmental Health and the school doctor what they thought about the school. The inspectors asked an environmental health officer to come to the school on the third day of the inspection to look at the kitchens and bathrooms, showers and toilets in some of the houses.

The summary section of this report is written in language children and young people can understand.

What the school does well:

- Most 'extended day' pupils are happy staying at the boarding houses after lessons finish to join in activities and have tea
- Dart and Exe Houses are very comfortable houses for children to live in
- Children like the many different activities that they can do after school, and they really enjoy going to the new youth club
- Children can bring their belongings and decorate their bedrooms to make them feel more personal
- Children can choose what they eat from a menu; there are healthy options and a good amount of food is available at mealtimes
- The school makes sure that children understand what bullying is about and deals with any bullying very seriously
- Staff make a lot of effort and work hard to look after children well and they deal with difficult behaviour
- Staff and children generally get on well together and children say they like staying at the school
- The teachers and the care staff tell each other about different parts of the children's day to make sure that everyone knows what is happening
- Parents are pleased with how their children are looked after and say that they are made to feel welcome to visit or telephone the school
- The Principal, staff and Governors of the school want to get things right so that children are looked after in the best possible ways

What has improved since the last inspection?

- One new shower was fitted in Tavy House
- The school is looking at arranging for window handles to be replaced so that windows can be opened in some houses
- Information about the school and what it does is being re-written to bring it up to date
- The school has a new member of staff, the 'home/school support worker' who will meet with families
- A psychotherapist now comes to talk with staff about ways of teaching and looking after children well
- The school is looking at and talking with people outside of the school about how staff in all schools deal with children's difficult behaviour
- The school and local authority are looking at how best to keep both children and staff safe
- The school and local authority have talked about upgrading the boarding houses

What they could do better:

- Culm, Otter and Tavy houses need better bathrooms, toilets and showers, and old, worn out and damaged furniture should be replaced
- The kitchens in Culm and Tavy need to be improved and children and staff need to be able to wash their hands properly
- Repairs need to be done more quickly in the houses when there is damage
- Some paperwork need to be written differently and have more information in it
- Staff need to make a note of what medicines parents send in to the school, and then when children take it home again
- The local authority should make sure that staff have enough training, information and advice about how to look after children with particular special needs, before these children come to the school
- All staff working in the school should do basic child protection training
- Some fire precautions need to be better
- The school should check-out if there are enough staff working in the houses to look after all children safely and well, now that children with many different needs live together in the houses
- The school should write to the inspectors to tell them about serious things that happen in the houses as soon as possible
- The Governors should make sure that they arrange for someone to visit the houses every half-term and check on things, then write up a report about what they have seen, and give this to the Principal and the other governors within two weeks of the visit

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

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

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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 and 15

Quality in this outcome is adequate. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Poor environmental factors and inadequate resources impact detrimentally upon the promotion and safeguarding of the welfare of children. Meals provide a nutritious diet.

EVIDENCE:

Lunches and the evening meals are prepared in the school kitchens. Children eat their lunch in the school dining hall. The evening meals are brought to Culm, Otter and Tavy houses and served by the catering staff from the respective house kitchens. Children plan and choose their food from weekly menus, which offer a choice of meals for both lunch and the evening meal. The menus offer healthy options, a range of choice and provide a balanced, nutritious diet. The children living in Exe and Dart Houses have their own budgets and these houses make their own catering arrangements. Care staff in all houses provide breakfasts, and 'snacks' in each house at the end of the school day, and at suppertime. In Culm, Otter and Tavy houses, these light meals were provided from the kitchen areas of the communal sitting rooms. Kitchen areas did not provide separate hand washing facilities. Care staff were reported to have completed food hygiene training; certificates were not seen on personnel files.

The inspectors ate lunch in the school dining room on two separate days, and enjoyed tasty, well-cooked meals. Most children said that the food was generally good and they had enough to eat. The inspectors noted that food was plentiful and that children were served fruit juice with their lunch.

One inspector joined the children and staff in Exe house for the evening meal. Care staff prepared a feta cheese salad with quiche and fresh fruit and cream for dessert. One child who chose not to eat this meal was later given an alternative. The evening meal in each of the other units was different; for example in Otter the young people had a hot meal with cake for dessert. One

inspector joined children for breakfast in Tavy House. Children ate a breakfast of cereal and toast; staff said that occasionally a cooked breakfast was made. There was plenty of fresh fruit available for young people to have as snack in between meals. On the whole, children and staff who were spoken to said that they enjoyed the food provided.

The systems to log, store and administer medications at the school were complicated because not all children stayed at the boarding houses from Monday to Friday, some attended just for the school day and others stayed for part of the week. This meant that several systems had to be implemented in order to deal with these varying circumstances. In order to address this, one senior care worker had been given the task of managing all of the medication coming in and out of the school. He had implemented procedures across each boarding house and another in school using primarily a monitored dosage system. These procedures were largely successful and it was recognised that a huge amount of work was necessary to ensure effectiveness. The doctor who visited the school on a regular basis reported no concerns regarding the health care given to the children. The school currently has a vacancy for the school nurse post allocated to the school; this position will be filled shortly.

When parents brought the child's medication in to the school, the child was not involved in the monitored dosage system. Whilst the school quite rightly insisted that medication was brought in to school in its original container, there was no overall system to log the actual amount of medication coming in and leaving the school.

The school dealt with a large amount of controlled drugs, it was considered that these were held securely in locked offices which held lockable medicine cabinets, these, were fixed to the wall or floor, other than in the school where a drugs trolley was used. Although there was a record of the amount of controlled drugs held under the monitored dosage system, the practice was for only one member of staff to administer the medication to the young person unchecked. This was verified by the school's log book that contained one signature for the administration of all drugs across school and the boarding houses. The inspectors recommended in line with good practice requirements, that two members of staff should administer and check controlled drugs. The school indicated that this would prove difficult to manage, given current staffing levels in the houses. The school had improved safe care of medicines by stopping the practice of children travelling with medicines in taxis into school.

Some children accommodated at the school presented with more complex needs and care practice needed to address intimate care needs. Staff were seen to be dealing with these issues sensitively and endeavoured not to cause embarrassment to the children concerned. However practice observed, raised questions regarding the need for staff to receive specialist advice regarding supporting children in meeting their intimate care needs. Staff had not

received training to address specific needs and the school did not have a clinical waste disposal system in place. The laundering of soiled clothing and bedding was reported not to be an issue at present. There was no intimate care policy in place to provide guidance to staff in caring for children.

Each young person's file that was examined contained permission to administer first aid and medication. Staff were reported to have undertaken training in First Aid, with a 'first aider' available on each shift. Certificates were not seen.

There was a system to record the required information about health and health planning; this was stored on a computerised system. In some records examined, the information that was held was insufficient, particularly regarding how to meet some children's health needs that had been identified.

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 and 27

Quality in this outcome is poor. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. There are systems in place to encourage children to develop acceptable behaviour, but shortfalls in policy and procedures potentially place safeguarding welfare at risk.

EVIDENCE:

Bedrooms provide accommodation for two children, but most rooms were occupied by only one child at the time of inspection, providing them with a good level of privacy. Children could not dial out from the houses without asking for an outside line to be arranged by staff. Thus children were not able to make and receive telephone calls in private and without staff permission. Some children had mobile phones and could make private telephone calls in

line with the school's mobile phone policy. Some children required staff help or oversight with intimate or bodily functions; staff involved in their care had not received adequate advice or training in these matters. Shortfalls in practice and knowledge were evidenced during the inspection. For example, staff were observed disposing of soiled clothing in a 'nappy' sack into the general waste 'Biffa-bin'. The child had cleaned himself in his bedroom and then left this room to go to a bathroom to wash his hands [cross-infection potential]. No soap or bacterial handwash was available in this bathroom. However, the inspectors found that staff dealt sensitively with these issues, and made every effort to promote dignity and privacy for the children concerned.

A complaints policy was in place and available to families and children. It required expansion to provide for the handling of any complaints made against the head of the school, and to provide information to children and their parents about how they can make a complaint directly to the Commission for Social Care Inspection. Complaints were not held centrally, but copies of each complaint were held on individual children's files. The Principal said that each complaint was discussed at Governors Meetings and included in their agenda. The Principal said that she informs the governor's visitor regarding which individual files to look at containing recent complaints. There were no reports from the governor's representative available in the school to assess whether this method was sufficient for this person to undertake effective monitoring.

The school makes excellent effort to address bullying issues. Each year a 'bullying week' takes place, which the children enjoy and spoke positively about. There is an Anti-bullying Committee and posters are in place around the school informing children about the matter and the forums in place. Families and children are provided with good information regarding the school's perspective and stance on dealing with bullying. Children spoken with said that there was some bullying in the school, but that it was sorted out and they felt able to tell staff about it when it arose. Parents said that they believed their children were well looked after and kept safe at the school. There was an effective system in place to deal with any unauthorised absences and ensure children's safety.

The school said they had submitted the child protection procedures and policy to the LEA advisor. It was not clear if the policy had also been submitted to the local Safeguarding Board for their comment as required. The policy did not include all the requirements of Appendix 1 of the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools. Three members of staff were designated as child protection officers within the school. Teaching and care staff had completed basic child protection training, but ancillary staff said they had not been included in any child protection training as required.

Two notifications had been made to the Commission regarding child protection incidents, but these had not been made at the time of the initiation of enquiries. The Commission's records indicate that the school does not have a

system in place for notifying the Commission for Social Care Inspection of any serious incident within the school that has necessitated the police being called to the school, whether or not injury has been caused to a child. School records showed that such incidents had occurred in 2006.

The school uses a "traffic light system" to manage the behaviour of most children both in lessons and in the houses. This involves scoring positive and negative behaviour to achieve a 'colour'. The details of the behaviour were entered on to the database and the score for each young person was calculated. The objective was to reward and reinforce positive behaviour, which the majority of young people responded well to. The inspectors heard that some children who had been awarded 'green' the previous week, were being rewarded with a trip to the cinema. These individuals were very enthusiastic and proud of their achievement! The school acknowledge that the traffic light system is not so successful for some of the more recently admitted children who present needs across the autistic spectrum; alternative behaviour management strategies to assist these children were reported to be employed by the school.

Children who had been awarded 'red 1' had their names recorded on loose leaf paper held in a specific A4 folder. The inspectors were told that a 'red' award was seen as a 'sanction'. Sanctions were also reported to be recorded within the house log books, but not necessarily recorded in a way to include all of the required details. This approach to recording sanctions did not provide accessible clear information about sanctions given, nor enable easy overall monitoring by senior managers and the governing body. A list of permissible sanctions was not seen attached to the 'red 1' folder or log-books for staff guidance.

The discipline policy did not refer to or provide guidance to staff regarding the use of physical restraint. Restraints were recorded within 'spiral bound' books, and not bound books as required for both restraint and sanction recording, to ensure all information remains secure. The inspectors found error in chronological numbering of books used and although the standard of recording detail was good, not all individual entries noted the duration of the restraint. Senior staff had signed the entries for the previous term. Recording showed that there had been a significant increase in the number of 'ground recovery' physical restraints to children rising throughout 2006. Entries in the accident book recorded 18 physical assaults on staff in the same time period. The Principal was aware and concerned about these issues, and was seeking the best way forward to support staff and ensure best practice. She had sought guidance from the local authority, held discussion with colleagues and attended a conference with other schools regarding behaviour management and physical restraint. The next staff training day in July was scheduled to discuss these matters; the Principal indicated that physical restraint practice was to be reviewed and possibly a study of new skills to be undertaken. Currently, staff are taught 'Team Teach' strategies for de-escalation and the physical restraint of children.

The school intends to regularly update this training; the Vice Principal for Care is a qualified Team Teach trainer.

Risk assessment for activities were undertaken for all off site trips, and were approved by a risk assessment coordinator. Discussion was held with the coordinator about how the format for these risk assessments could be expanded, to ensure that specific rather than general information is recorded as having been assessed. This would then ensure that the school could produce evidence of all the aspects considered during the risk assessment process. The school used a more detailed and comprehensive risk assessment system for school camp; this system provided the required information. Pupil risk assessments were seen, these contained some very detailed and effective risk management strategies and the documents clearly provided a good working tool. However, risk assessments seen for children with more complex care needs lacked detail and did not address pertinent issues regarding the child's care.

The designated health and safety worker for boarding said he completed a termly assessment of the houses and this report was provided to the Principal and the Governors for their consideration. A tour of Otter house revealed that good ventilation within this particular unit could be impeded because staff and children were unable to open some of the windows in some communal and bedroom areas of the house. This had been noted in a recent health and safety report and the school had sought quotes to repair window frames. The poor state of bathrooms, toilets, shower rooms and kitchens in some houses had not been included in recent health and safety reports; the Principal said these matters had not been brought to her attention by staff. The inspectors requested the attendance of an environmental health officer on the third day of the inspection to comment upon poor standards found. The environmental health officer advised the need for hand washing facilities to be provided in kitchen areas and noted that the standard of soap and paper towels provided in Tavy and Culm houses, did not provide effective hand washing and drying facilities in toilets and bathrooms.

The Fire Service had inspected the school in June 2006 as part of the Boarding inspection. Recommendations were made in their report to the school to act upon. The Principal had brought these matters to the attention of the LEA; a site visit was undertaken during the inspection to look at these issues, and further discussion regarding the report is taking place.

A selection of staff records were examined in order to establish the schools procedures for vetting staff. A proportion of files seen had only one reference for the employee, but subsequent files demonstrated that the school had since amended its practice to obtain the required two references for more recent employees. CRB checks were carried out through Devon County Council, one file had the original disclosure form, the others had a letter from the Council which confirmed clearance. Some employees had not completed applications

forms and had forwarded their CV's instead; this meant that the school had no uniform mechanism to obtain crucial information about potential employees.

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 and 22

Quality in this outcome is excellent. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Children receive good individual support and education and leisure opportunities are well provided.

EVIDENCE:

Residential provision makes commendable effort to offer good support to pupils, offer a wide range of activities and hobbies, and promote education. The way that after school activities were organised had undergone some changes in order to account for the new system of supporting some 'extended day children' until after tea (approximately to 6:00p.m.) This involved two lots of organised activities both before and after tea, which added an enjoyable and meaningful structure to the evening for everyone using the school

Children told the inspectors that lots of leisure activities were provided after school, one inspector was able to observe some of these activities and agreed that the range of activities available was very good. On the evening in question, children were able to choose between football, cycling, swimming, judo or walking other preferred a quiet night in doors watching TV, using the computer or playing on Xbox or play station. The school had its own youth club and the inspector was kindly given a tour by one child. This was well equipped with table football game, air hockey, pool table and tea and coffee making facilities. There was a big screen and projector and a film was to be shown on the night of inspection. The young person said that the youth club is also used for parties, discos and karaoke.

The children told inspectors that the school was organising two summer 'holidays' one camping in Gloucestershire, and the other being a trip to London. They were looking forward to these events.

The school had good structured arrangements in place to ensure that detailed information was passed from the care staff to the teaching staff and vice versa. This alongside the 'traffic light' system meant that a holistic approach to providing education and care to children was employed. The senior care meeting, the care team meeting and handover sessions each provided forums for information exchange and gave staff sufficient knowledge of the current presenting needs of individual children.

The care staff provided 'buzzer' on-call support to the teaching staff during lessons to assist with challenging behaviour and 'time-out' periods. Care staff said that the need for this assistance was increasing during lesson time. Care staff also contributed to all school review reports, and attended meetings regarding the children.

The school offers a range of support services available to individual children. This includes access to the school counsellor; the independent listener; a qualified masseuse for stress management; and access to local authority specialist services.

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 and 20

Quality in this outcome is adequate. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The school promotes the establishment and maintenance of positive relationships and collaborative decision-making processes. Placement plans provide insufficient detail for staff guidance. The 'broad' admission criteria results in children being placed who have diverse abilities and needs, impacting upon the provision of care

EVIDENCE:

Interactions between staff and children were observed as being positive. The staff teams were observed throughout the day, over breakfast and dinner, during activities and socialising in the sitting room area of the houses. Children appeared comfortable and relaxed; staff spoke to them respectfully and with good humour and patience.

Families enjoy positive contact with the school. Regular meetings with parents and children are held at the school; the Annual Review provides both parent(s) and child the opportunity to take in planning and decision-making. Parents reported that the school kept them well informed about their child's progress and involved them in decision making as appropriate. The computer system enabled the log entries for each child to be printed out and sent home to

families to keep them up to date. Parents said that care staff were approachable, very helpful, made them feel welcome and looked after their children well. The school is developing the post of 'Home/school support worker' who will liaise with families.

There was some good practical evidence to confirm that the school worked hard to maintain contact between young person and their families and that there was frequent communication between the parties. Contact details for significant people were set out on the computer system under the placement plan section and in the young person file, however, there was no information available about how the individual contact arrangements between the young person, parents and significant others took place; or any legal restriction on contact.

Pupils are offered a good range of opportunities to take part in decision-making. There is a School Council; a meeting is arranged for each term, enabling children's voices to be heard. During the inspection, 'elections' for the Vice Chair were taking place. One child told the inspectors that he had been nominated, and he was very enthusiastic about the possibility of taking part in the Council and representing his house. The anti-bullying Committee also offers children the opportunity to be represented and heard. The school listener and school counsellor are accessible to all children on an individual basis. Children are offered choice in meals and engaging in preferred activities.

The school sensitively manages admission processes, but admission criteria needs further consideration by the local authority. The inspectors heard how sensitive and well considered strategies were being employed by the school to support the recent admission of a child with complex needs. The inspectors observed the patience and commitment of the staff in assisting this child to settle into school life. The 'broad' admission criteria results in children being placed who have diverse abilities and needs.

The inspectors observed a wide range of ability and presenting behaviours of the children accommodated, and commend the care staff for their commitment to meet the individual needs of each child whilst attempting to provide care for the overall group of children living in the house. It was evident during the inspection that this was not an easy task to manage. The inspectors found that staff had not been provided with specific training, advice or guidance, nor had specialist resources been provided to the school, prior to the admission of particular children with complex needs, to equip staff with the necessary knowledge and resources to meet all care needs satisfactorily. The Principal highlighted the need for the local authority to consider more carefully risk assessment for new intake.

The school has recently appointed a Complex needs co-ordinator and a psychotherapist has commenced weekly visits to support care and teaching

staff in their interactions with children. The school has developed strong links with the Connexions service, and local agencies to support children leaving the school.

The computer network provided a system on which the staff could develop individual placement plans. At the time of this inspection, the information about each child's needs held on this computer system was not sufficient to constitute an individual placement plan. Furthermore, systematic documentation, which would constitute a placement plan, was not available. There was very little information about the specific and sometimes complex needs of each child. No information was located that directed staff regarding how to meet the assessed care needs on a daily basis, how to monitor of the implementation of the plan and measure progress, and there was no evidence of the updating of plans to meet arising needs or changed circumstances.

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):

23 ,24 and 25

Quality in this outcome is adequate overall. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Refurbishment and increased maintenance is needed in order to improve the children's living environment and safeguard welfare

EVIDENCE:

The inspectors visited each of the houses. They found that the standards of accommodation varied between the houses. Culm House provides a poor level of accommodation; Tavy and Otter Houses provide poor/adequate accommodation; Exe House provides a good standard and Dart House provides excellent accommodation.

Culm house provided the poorest standard. For example, the flooring in two upstairs toilets was inadequate; urine had seeped through the ill-fitting flooring into the floorboards underneath and there was a very strong, unpleasant odour. Similarly, inadequate flooring in an adjacent bathroom had led to water soaked floorboards, emitting an odour. One shower room on the ground floor, (said not to be in use) had extremely rusty pipes and radiator, flaking ceiling, rusting shower rail, and broken plasterwork. One downstairs toilet had a cracked toilet pan, which was reported to have been in this state for some considerable time. Worn enamel in baths led to a stained and unclean

appearance. Broken plasterwork was evident in several areas; soap was provided from 'commercial style' wall fitted soap dispensers and did not provide soap effectively. Paper towels were provided for hand drying, but the quality of the paper provided did not readily ensure absorbance of moisture. Toilet seats although clean, looked 'dull' and worn; some toilets were 'junior' toilets and unsuitable for larger children. There were no toilet seat lids fitted.

Furniture throughout the ground floor was worn, and in a poor state. The sitting room sofas were covered by clean 'throws' in an attempt to hide the worn furniture. Furniture was generally in a poor state throughout the ground floor. A broken chair with leg off was seen in one boy's bedroom. The kitchen had broken tiles on walls and flooring, impacting on providing effective cleaning. The lock to the 'art' walk-in cupboard was broken; inspectors saw that this area was full of items, described by staff as 'junk'. Hazardous substances were seen to be kept herein and accessible to children. (this was seen to have been cleared by the third day of the inspection). Overall, this house did not provide a 'homely' residential environment for children to live in.

In Tavy house, sofas and kitchens were seen to be of a similar poor standard to Culm house. In Otter, the kitchens had been upgraded, and satisfactory furniture was provided. Both of these houses had made good effort to try to provide a comfortable and 'homely' atmosphere. There were games, books, plants and ornaments, and rooms were kept tidy and organised for particular functions. However, the standards of bathrooms, showers and toilets were unsatisfactory in these houses. There was a broken door lock on a shower room, broken and mildewed tiles, unsatisfactory toilets and worn baths as in Culm house. In Otter house, toilet pans were worn and stained and looked 'dirty' even though they had been thoroughly cleaned. Staff in Otter had improved the quality of hand washing by providing 'domestic' soap dispensers for use in toilets and bathrooms. Poor plasterwork was evident in these houses; in Otter, staff reported that they had put up wood panelling to protect the hall walls. Windows lacked handles, and could not be opened to provide adequate ventilation.

Care staff are commended for the effort they have put into these two houses in re-decorating them themselves, in their commitment to provide 'a good home' environment for the children. Two boys in Tavy showed one inspector their bedrooms; it was apparent how proud they were of their rooms. Care staff said that they tried to decorate when they could, but increasing demands upon their time in supporting and looking after children meant that this was very limited. Damage was seen in these three houses and although a repair system was in place for caretaking and maintenance, the volume of work was reported to have increased. It was evident during the inspection that the work was not always acted upon promptly. Staff said that they also undertook minor repairs to the houses to 'keep up standards'. Culm House had a locked cupboard to store tools and nails etc.

In contrast, Exe house provided good quality accommodation and a comfortable 'homely environment' for the girls to live in. Staff took care to make this house a pleasant place to be in. Dart house had been re-furnished and upgraded, and provided an excellent stylish and contemporary living environment for the older boys. The quality of furnishings was good; ornaments and paintings added to the 'family' style atmosphere. Dart house provided a 'gym' and a snooker table/dining table. It was noticeable that damage in these two houses was minimal. The school has been in consultation with the local authority with regard to the modernisation and upgrading of residential accommodation.

Children are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms in all the houses and can bring in personal possessions and put up posters. Many had brought in electrical equipment, such as music systems, televisions etc. As only one electrical socket was in each bedroom, this meant that extension cables were used to run from equipment to sockets, providing a hazard.

Staff sleeping -in rooms were situated close-by to children's bedrooms to provide any required assistance and adequate supervision at night times

The extensive grounds were well kept and offered pleasant outside areas for the children to play in. There was 'adventure style' climbing equipment, wooden benches made by staff, and a lovely 'sensory' garden, built by staff with lottery funding. Wooded areas provided opportunities for nature walks.

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):

18, 28, 29, 31,32 and 33

Quality in this outcome is poor. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Shortfalls in training, staffing qualification, policies, recording and required monitoring processes potentially place children's welfare at risk

EVIDENCE:

A selection of children's files were examined. There was a format to gather the majority of the information required, (held within the computer database), but this information was not complete. All files examined contained information about emergency contacts and educational statements, but not all of the required information was included or completed.

The needs of some of the children most recently admitted were distinctly different from those already using the service. This presented staff with a range of difficulties, which were apparent during the inspection. The diversity of need meant that the approach required for each group of children was very different; this had an impact upon the staff team's ability to effectively manage both groups at the same time. The more recently admitted children presented with a range of complex needs that in some cases required a specific approach. The general impression was that staff felt ill equipped and in need of more detailed information and training, in order to better manage unfamiliar situations. This in turn would provide a more effective service to the children. However, the team were experienced and committed to the children and observations indicated that whilst the situation currently needs to be addressed, the staff team were coping well, working under considerable pressure.

There was no staffing policy to assess that this guidance ensured that the level of staffing was adequate to meet the schools Statement of Purpose and Function, and provide satisfactory levels of care and meet the needs of the children accommodated. It could not be assessed therefore, that the school increases the number of staff looking after children above the minimum required by the staffing policy where children's needs or other circumstances require it.

The school indicated that approximately 50% of staff had gained the NVQ3 award in 'Caring for children and young people' and that senior care managers were near completion of the NVQ4 award. Thus the 80% qualification minimum requirement, has not yet been met by the school.

All staff complete an induction programme, but ancillary workers said that this had not included child protection training. Supervision arrangements are in place, but were not looked at in this inspection. As highlighted, there were shortfalls in providing training to staff in some specific areas, to meet the needs of children accommodated in the school.

Staffing rotas showed that children received a continuity of staff, with assigned staff working in each house. The school had suitable senior 'on-call' and shift leadership arrangements in place; a waking night worker, plus camera surveillance system of corridors in houses and covering the grounds, to ensure children were kept safe. Each house staff included staff of both genders, with the exception of Exe house (girls) wherein only female staff worked. Rotas included a handover session to share information to provide a continuity of care. The role of the care staff had expanded to include transporting some extended day children to and from school; and there was said to be increasing demands upon care staff time in supporting teaching staff dealing with challenging behaviour in the classrooms.

The Principal and senior managers provide strong leadership within the school. Regular scheduled meetings ensure that teaching and care staff are provided with good information and knowledge of each child's needs. It was evident that once an issue of concern was brought to the Principal's attention, that this was promptly acted upon. The Principal seeks support and guidance from the local authority as required.

The Principal completes a termly report to Governors, reviewing the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for boarding children. Senior staff present their development plan and budgets to the Principal for consideration within the overall school development plan. Children's views expressed within school forums are considered in development functions.

The Principal is aware of the level of police involvement in the school and communication with the police is in place.

Although the Governor's representative was reported to have visited the boarding houses each half-term, there were no written reports to evidence this as required. The current Governor in this role, had yet to commence this duty and no visit had taken place the previous half-term. Therefore it was not clear if the visitor checks the school's records of complaints, sanctions and the use of physical restraint as required; the previous visitor had not signed off these records looked at. The Principal reported that the care staff member covering health and safety had been delegated the task of assessing the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment by the Governing body, and his submitted termly report informed the Governors of the state of the houses. The health and safety worker, in turn, said he was advised of concerns in various houses by the senior worker therein who brought issues to his attention. Examination of the reports, showed shortfalls in identifying the unsatisfactory standards in accommodation resources found during the inspection.

As there were no written reports from the visitor, to monitor the welfare of the children, it could not be assessed if appropriate action was taken on the recommendations or issues of concern raised in such reports, nor if the visitor had provided opportunities for any child or member of staff to meet with them to discuss issues.

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>
14	2
15	2

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	1
4	2
5	1
6	4
7	2
8	3
10	1
26	1
27	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	4
13	4
22	3

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
2	3
9	4
11	2
17	1
20	2

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
16	X
21	X
23	2
24	2
25	1

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	X
18	1
19	X
28	1
29	2
30	X
31	2
32	3
33	1

Are there any outstanding recommendations from the last inspection? **YES**

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	RS24	Consideration should be given to refurbishing Tavy, Otter, and Culme houses to ensure all parts of boarding provide good quality accommodation [previous recommendation not yet implemented]	
2	RS14	The intimate care needs of children should be identified and promoted by the local authority ensuring that sufficient advice and guidance, resources and facilities are in place to meet identified need prior to admission [National Minimum Standard 14.2]	
3	RS14	Each child should have a clear written health plan that includes all issues required by this standard [National Minimum Standard 14.6]	
4	RS14	The administration of controlled drugs should be checked and signed by two members of staff [National Minimum Standard 14.17]	
5	RS14	A system should be established to record the actual amount of medication that is not covered by the monitored dosage system, coming in and out of the school [National Minimum Standard 14.20]	
6	RS15	The recommendations of the environmental health officer's report should be implemented [National Minimum Standard 15.5]	

7	RS3	Procedural guidelines to staff on privacy and confidentiality are required [National Minimum Standard 3.2]	
8	RS3	Children should be able to make and receive telephone calls in private and without staff permission excepting where there are clear grounds that welfare is at risk [National Minimum Standards 3.5 & 3.6]	
9	RS3	Where children require staff help with intimate or bodily functions, all staff involved should have received appropriate training and be provided with clear written guidelines on provision of such assistance, which are followed in practice [National Minimum Standards 3.10 and 14.4.]	
10	RS33	Complaints should be logged centrally for monitoring purposes by the governing body's representative [National Minimum Standard 33.3]	
11	RS4	The complaints procedure should be expanded to provide for the handling of any complaint made against the Principal of the school. [National Minimum Standard 4.3]	
12	RS4	Children and their parents should be told how they can make a complaint directly to the Commission for Social Care Inspection within the complaints information available to them [National Minimum Standard 4.8]	
13	RS5	The Principal should ascertain that the child protection procedures have been submitted to the local Safeguarding Board as well as having been submitted to the LEA for comment [National Minimum Standard 5.3]	
14	RS5	Prompt notification of the initiation of any child protection enquiries involving the school should be made to the Commission for Social Care Inspection [National Minimum Standard 5.4]	
15	RS5	The school's policy and procedures for responding to allegations or suspicions of abuse to a child should include all the requirements of Appendix 1 of the Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards Inspection Regulations [National Minimum Standard 5.4]	
16	RS5	The Principal should ensure that there is training for all staff, including ancillary staff,	

		in the prevention and recognition of abuse, dealing with disclosures or suspicions of abuse and the schools child protection procedures [National Minimum Standard 5.8]	
17	RS7	The school should have a system in place for notifying the Commission for Social Care Inspection of any serious incident within the school which has necessitated the police being called to the school, whether or not injury has been caused to a child [National Minimum Standard 7.6]	
18	RS10	The school should provide clear written policy and procedures on the control, disciplinary and physical intervention measures which may be used [National Minimum Standard 10.2]	
19	RS10	A record of all sanctions given should be kept in a bound and numbered book that contains a list of permitted sanctions. Where sanctions are imposed, children should be encouraged to write or otherwise have their views recorded and sign their names against them, if possible, in the records kept by the school [National Minimum Standard 10.9]	
20	RS10	Records of physical restraints should be kept in a bound and numbered book (not spiral bound). The duration of the restraint should always be included in this record [National Minimum Standard 10.14]	
21	RS10	A representative of the school's governing body, should read and make written comment upon the use of sanctions and physical intervention during visits to the school made under Standard 33 [National Minimum Standard 10.18]	
22	RS26	The flooring in two upstairs toilets in Culm house should be suitably replaced to eliminate urine soaked flooring and eliminate the strong unpleasant odour therein [National Minimum Standard 26.2]	05/07/06
23	RS26	The bathrooms in Culm, Otter and Tavy should be inspected by the local authority to assess the poor state of these facilities [National Minimum Standard 26.2]	

24	RS26	The kitchens in Culm and Tavy should be fitted with adequate flooring and broken and missing wall tiles replaced [National Minimum Standard 26.2]	
25	RS26	Particular risks arising for some children with complex needs should be fully identified and detailed risk assessments completed to ensure their safety [National Minimum Standard 26.3]	
26	RS26	Recommendations included in the Fire Service report from the June 2006 inspection should be implemented by the local authority [National Minimum Standard 26.6]	
27	RS22	The local authority should ensure that when children who have particular support needs or particular problems, are admitted to the school, that the school is suitably resourced and staff adequately skilled to provide help, guidance and support as needed [National Minimum Standard 22.1]	
28	RS11	The local authority should risk assess new intake to ensure that both the needs of the child concerned and the likely effects of his/her admission on the existing group of children are taken into account in decisions on admission to the school [National Minimum Standard 11.5]	
29	RS17	Written placement plans should include sufficient detail; identifying needs, specifying how the school will care for the child and the plan should be closely monitored to measure progress and reflect changing need or circumstances [National Minimum Standards 17.1 & 17.2]	
30	RS20	Contact arrangements should always be entered in all children's placement plans to make sure that any restrictions on contact are imposed [National Minimum Standard 20.3]	
31	RS24	New furniture should be provided in Culm and Tavy, and some furniture upgraded in Otter to provide an acceptable standard of accommodation [National Minimum Standard 24.2]	
32	RS24	The school should review care-taking staffing levels to ensure that any damage to the	

		premises and furniture is repaired promptly [National Minimum Standard 24.3]	
33	RS24	The school should consider whether there is a need for sluicing and washing facilities for soiled laundry [National Minimum Standard 24.13]	
34	RS18	The school should ensure that all required information is kept in children's files as detailed in this standard [National Minimum Standard 18.2]	
35	RS28	The school should provide a staffing policy and it should include all points detailed in this standard [National Minimum Standards 28.2 & 28.3]	
36	RS28	The school and local authority should review staffing levels and increase the minimum required by the staffing policy where children's needs or other circumstances require this [National Minimum Standard 28.5]	
37	RS29	Staff should receive sufficient training and development opportunities that equip them with the skills required to meet the needs of the children [National Minimum Standard 29.1]	
38	RS31	Priority should be given to staff completing their NVQ level 3 as soon as possible to provide a minimum ratio of 80% qualified staff [National Minimum Standard 31.4]	
39	RS33	The assigned representative of the governing body must visit the school at least every half term and complete a written report on the conduct of the school, which is provided to the Principal and each member of the governing body within two weeks [National Minimum Standards 33.2 & 33.4]	

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