



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

Mount Tamar Special School

**Row Lane
St Budeaux
Plymouth
Devon
PL5 2PY**

Lead Inspector
Tina Maddison

Announced Inspection
1st March 2006 10:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Residential Special Schools*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk 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	Mount Tamar Special School
Address	Row Lane St Budeaux Plymouth Devon PL5 2PY
Telephone number	01752 365128
Fax number	01752 351227
Email address	
Provider Web address	Woodlands.school@plymouth.gov.uk
Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school	Plymouth City Council
Name of Head	Mr B Jones
Name of Head of Care	Mrs J Cook
Age range of residential pupils	7 years to 16 years
Date of last welfare inspection	29 th November 2004

Brief Description of the School:

Mount Tamar is a school for children who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is situated in a pleasant area of Plymouth in its own grounds. Pupils are taught in small classes to give them as much attention as they need to enable them to reach their full potential.

The residential provision at the school is situated in a block that is separate from the main school. It is built on four levels, and although physically the building is not conducive to a homely atmosphere, the Head of care and care staff have worked hard to provide a homely and relaxing interior.

Mount Tamar House is open four nights per week during term time. Pupils attend from one to four nights, and occasionally on an "as necessary" basis. A variety of activities are offered, both on and off site. The hostel has the use of the school transport.

SUMMARY

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

This announced inspection took place over three days, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd of March 2006. On the 2nd of March Inspectors observed the morning and evening care routines at the school. Four staff and seven parent/carer inspection questionnaires were returned. A tour of Mount Tamar House was given by the pupils. A variety of meals were taken with the pupils. Records and documents for a variety of areas were examined. An evening outing to the local bowling alley was observed.

The Inspectors would like to thank the Pupils, Head Teacher, Head of Care, and Care staff for their hospitality and help during this inspection.

What the school does well:

The Care provision at Mount Tamar School is well managed and organised. The care team work effectively together to create a homely and relaxed environment for the pupils. The Inspectors felt that the relationships between the staff and pupils were excellent. The pupils spoken to all said how much they enjoyed staying at Mount Tamar House. The school is very good at involving pupils in decision making processes. Staff dealt in a consistent and fair way with the pupils and there is a great deal of fun and good humour. Pupils are aware of how they are expected to behave, and there are effective sanctions and reward systems in place. All relevant policies and record systems are in place and work well. All parent/carer questionnaires returned were overwhelmingly positive and included the following statements:

"My son has made friends and has improved his behaviour and is building his confidence".

"I think the school is great, Children are very happy, I have been very happy".

"The Hostel is very comfortable, homely, clean and well maintained. Well done all, keep up the hard work!"

"The staff do an amazing job, they remain firm and loving".

What has improved since the last inspection?

The school now differentiates between incidents and physical intervention, and records accordingly. These are now recorded in robust numbered and bound books. Fire bells are now tested to the frequency required by Devon Fire and Rescue Service. Unannounced monthly monitoring visits are now undertaken by a Governor of the school. The showers have been refitted.

What they could do better:

Consideration should be given to reviewing the number of care staff on duty to ensure that pupils care needs are met at all times.

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

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

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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Being Healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

14,15.

At Mount Tamar school, the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted. Meals provided are of a good standard and mealtimes are a sociable and relaxed occasion.

EVIDENCE:

From observations and records, and feedback from parents and pupils, it was clear that the school promotes a healthy life style through personal, social and health education in school and during the time that the pupils were resident in Mount Tamar House. There was a policy and guidance to promote the health of pupils, including the dangers of smoking and taking drugs. Each child had a health plan. The pupils benefit from the employment of a school nurse at the school. All care staff had up to date first aid training and the school had obtained permission from parents/carers to administer first aid and appropriate non prescription medication and to seek treatment when necessary. The administration and storage of medication was found to be appropriate and well managed. Clear details of each drug and its strength were recorded and referenced back to the original prescription. Any allergies known were recorded on the MAR chart. Controlled drugs were recorded in a bound and numbered controlled drugs register. All injuries, accidents and illnesses were recorded on the file of the individual pupil.

Mealtimes were observed to be well managed by staff and were a relaxed and sociable occasion for pupils. During mealtimes, pupils freely chatted to the inspectors. The food was considered to be good by the pupils, and there was a choice of meals. Menus evidenced that there is a variety of wholesome and nutritious meals offered at the school. Staff were aware of the eating habits of the children, and when medication may affect their appetites. The dining room is a bright and practical area. Pupils were aware of the mealtime routines and were found to be well mannered and considerate towards each other at mealtimes.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

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

The welfare of children at Mount Tamar School is promoted and Mount Tamar House provides physical safety and security.

EVIDENCE:

Staff and pupil records were kept in a locked cabinet and locked office and were accessible to only the staff who needed to know the contents. Staff and pupils confirmed that the care files were seen regularly by them in preparation for the reviews. Staff were aware of the need to pass on information of a child protection nature. The staff were observed to respect the pupil's privacy and knock on bedroom doors before entering. Bathrooms and toilets had locks on the doors. The locks could be overridden if the staff needed access in an emergency. The care staff do not currently provide intimate care to any of the

pupils. There was a policy and procedure regarding the searching of pupil's possessions. All bedrooms are single rooms. There was a complaints policy and procedure, and pupils confirmed that they knew how to complain and to whom. There is a secure box in the entrance hall of the house where pupils can post any complaints.

There was a policy and procedure in place regarding child protection, which were known and understood by staff. The school has two child protection officers that deal with any area of concern regarding the pupils' welfare. Staff interviewed made it clear that they have a "radar" that means that they are able to detect any possible issues of abuse against the children, and they were clear about how they would deal with this. Child protection has been undertaken. The school has an anti bullying policy, and there is a secure box in the entrance hall where children can post any issues regarding bullying. Staff were clear about how they would deal with these, and were aware of which children were likely to be the victims of bullying and who may be a perpetrator. They used this knowledge to minimise bullying. Any pupils who had been bullied were dealt with sensitively, and those who bullied were helped to change their behaviour.

One significant event at the school was notified to the Comission for Social Care Inspection in the last year. Records detailed the outcome of any action or investigation. The staff work closely with parents/carers at all times, and reported all incidents.

The school had a policy and procedure to deal with pupils who were absent without authority. Staff were aware of this procedure. Written records were kept of any such incidents. Staff were aware that they could not stop a pupil leaving the campus.

The school had a behaviour management policy and procedure that included the use of sanctions. There was also a policy and procedure on physical intervention. Pupils were aware of sanctions and also the system of awarding "smileys" for positive behaviour that could be spent on sweets or small toys in the "smiley shop". Children are asked for their opinions regarding how many smileys they should be awarded during the daily feedback meeting. Sanctions took the form of losing rewards or suspension from going out on a trip. Team teach was the method of physical intervention used. This is used as a last resort. All staff had been trained in this method. A record of physical interventions is kept. The standard of behaviour observed during the inspection was seen to be very good, and was a credit to the staff and pupils during a trip out of the school to a local bowling centre.

The inspection of gas installations, electrical installations and boilers was carried out under the instruction of the LEA. Risk assessments were in place for staff, children and the building. A risk assessment was undertaken before each trip out of the school. Fire prevention records evidenced that equipment was regularly tested and staff had received appropriate training. The Fire Officer had recently visited the school and had no recommendations.

Staff files evidenced that recruitment procedures are carried out at the school, and all staff files contained all required elements. All care staff had a current CRB check in place.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

12,13,22

Educational progress is actively supported by Mount Tamar House. A range of enjoyable and purposeful activities are provided by care staff and enjoyed by pupils. An exemplary standard of individual support is given to pupils when they need it.

EVIDENCE:

The Head of care and care staff confirmed that they were all conversant with the educational needs and progress of the pupils who used Mount Tamar House. The Head of care visited the school each morning to update the teaching staff on the events of the previous evening. Informative and helpful handovers were observed at the start and end of the school day. Teaching staff confirmed that the care staff had the pupils ready for school each morning and that they worked closely together for the welfare of the pupils.

Pupils were able to do on homework with the assistance of staff at Mount Tamar House.

When pupils went to Mount Tamar House after school they took part in feedback time, where all pupils took it in turns and listened respectfully as each pupil told the others about their day. Sometimes activities take place in the house, and on other days a trip out of the school is arranged.

One of the Inspectors accompanied the staff and children on an evening visit to a bowling alley. The pupils behaved very well, and the staff were vigilant in making sure everyone was safe and having a good time.

The pupils confirmed that they were given the opportunity to attend clubs in the community such as football, marine cadets and a youth club.

Activities available in the house were television, games, videos and reading material.

The individual support given to the pupils was exemplary. The school exceeds the standard in this area. In line with each pupils needs and wishes, a great deal of nurturing was given to each pupil, and many situations where the care

staff demonstrated great kindness, sensitivity and appropriate humour were observed.

Staff ensured that any pupil with dietary requirements, personal, health or any other needs had those needs met.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

2,9,11,17,20

The staff at Mount Tamar House have excellent relationships with the children built on honesty and mutual respect. Children are encouraged to make decisions about their lives whilst staying at Mount Tamar House.

EVIDENCE:

Pupils at the school were aware that they could speak to any member of staff at any time. The school produces a school magazine that details achievements by pupils in the school. There was a house meeting every day after school when the pupils had the opportunity if they wished to, to share news of their day. This was also the time to discuss planned activities for the evening and ask questions and discuss issues. One of the Inspectors had an informal interview with a parent, who confirmed good relationships with the staff at the school, and who said that they felt listened to by staff regarding any issues in relation to the care of their child, and that the staff offered much needed support to parents if required.

During the inspection, members of staff were seen to set fair and consistent boundaries, based on positive care and control. Pupils spoken to stated that they felt staff were fair in their dealings with them. It was observed that members of staff and the pupils enjoyed good relationships and the pupils clearly knew where the boundaries were for acceptable behaviour. Relationships were relaxed and appropriate humour was used by staff to

defuse certain difficult situations, and it was clear that pupils had great respect for the staff.

The statement of purpose included a policy and procedures for pupils to be admitted to Mount Tamar House. All information was gathered and assessed prior to admission, which was done in a planned manner. The house has a child friendly handbook for pupils who used Mount Tamar House, which gave information about routines, key worker system etc. There was a buddy system in place. This was observed as during the inspection one child was having their first overnight stay at the house. Another child was assigned to look after them and show them their room and the routines of the house. Staff were very aware that this was the pupils first night and were very caring towards him. There was a comprehensive placement plan in each of the pupils files that were examined. The care needs of the pupil were identified and how these needs were to be met. Each pupil who used Mount Tamar House had a key worker who set aside specific time for the pupil as well as being available at other times. Placement plans have been regularly reviewed.

Pupils were able to use a telephone privately to contact their families. They are able to have visitors whilst they are staying at Mount Tamar House. Visitors were required to sign the visitor book when they arrived and when they departed.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

16,23,24,24,25.

Mount Tamar House provides a warm, clean and homely environment for the pupils.

EVIDENCE:

Pupils are able to wear their own clothes after school. The laundry staff were able to wash, dry and iron a school uniform in time for school the next day. The staff had a supply of pyjamas and toiletries etc to supplement those forgotten by pupils. There was a policy and procedure on the storage and recording of pocket money. The pupils took some pocket money with them when they went on an activity, to buy sweets or ice cream etc. The pocket money record was seen to be in order. Pocket money was observed being given out prior to an out of school activity, and the pupils were given some responsibility in how much they took with them. Money taken out was recorded and signed for.

The interior of Mount Tamar House is well maintained. The fenced outside hard play area, climbing frame and playing field provide safe areas in which pupils could let off steam and play team games.

The bedrooms are single rooms. Mount Tamar House was found to be very clean, warm and decorated in a homely manner. All pupils spoken with said that their beds were comfortable and they had adequate bedding. Some of the pupils had brought in possessions from home. The house had a comfortable

lounge area, and meals were taken in the school dining room. The house had sufficient baths, showers and toilets, which were situated near to the bedrooms. The staff had separate shower and toilet facilities. All toilets and shower rooms were found to be clean and odour free. A programme of updating the showers had been completed.

Management

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

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

The care at Mount Tamar House is very well managed and organised. Records for children and staff are generally well organised. The staff group are well trained, have excellent relationships with the children and are skilled and competent. Care staff numbers are adequate to meet the pupil's needs and keep them safe but the pupils would benefit from an additional staff member.

EVIDENCE:

The school statement of purpose is comprehensive, including clearly stating the range of care needs for which the school catered, the admission criteria and the number of pupils to be accommodated. The statement was sent to the placing authorities. Parents and carers were given a copy at the interview and there was a copy on the main entrance board for pupils to read. The school assessed the needs of the pupils prior to admission to ensure that their needs could be met. Files that were inspected contained all the information required

by standard 18. Staff records at Mount Tamar House contained all the relevant information required by the standard. There are no other persons other than the staff living on the premises. Generally all records kept on the premises are in good order. There was no school staffing policy that stated the minimum staffing requirement in order to meet the care needs of the pupils. Currently four members of staff are on duty in the evenings, and two care staff sleep in on a rota basis. Observation during the inspection evidenced barely adequate staffing levels, given the complex care needs of the pupils, the layout of the building and the fact that girls are now resident in the House, which means that one care staff is committed to the female pupil. That means only three care staff are available for the other pupils. The staff team is comprised of the Head of Care, and one male and two female care staff. Limited care staff numbers mean that it is sometimes difficult to cater for the wide age range and therefore the ability to arrange separate outings according to age and interests. A written record of which children and adults are sleeping in each night is available.

There was a rolling programme of training available for staff, and staff confirmed that they believed that the training opportunities met their training needs. All staff had a training development plan. The Head of care is accountable to the Head of the school. Care staff are accountable to the Head of care. Care staff confirmed that they received regular formal and informal supervision. Records were kept. The staff meet as a group every Friday morning after the children had left for school. Mount Tamar House is managed in a very competent manner by the Head of Care. There is a very low turnover of staff and staff commented that there was a feeling of being part of a family at Mount Tamar House. Monthly monitoring visits have been undertaken by one of the Governors from the school.

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	3
15	3

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

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

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

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

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

NO

Are there any outstanding recommendations from the last inspection?

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

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

No.	Standard	Recommendation	Timescale for action (Serious welfare concerns only)
1	RS28	Consideration should be given to reviewing the number of care staff on duty in order to ensure that all the pupils complex care needs are met.	

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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