



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

Witherslack Hall School

**Witherslack
Grange over Sands
Cumbria
LA11 6SD**

Lead Inspector
Mrs Anne Bannister

Announced Inspection
5th October 2005 09:30

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

Reader Information	
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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	Witherslack Hall School
Address	Witherslack Grange over Sands Cumbria LA11 6SD
Telephone number	015395 52397
Fax number	
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school	Witherslack Group of Schools
Name of Head	Michael A Barrow
Name of Head of Care	Richard Wilkins
Age range of residential pupils	11-19years
Date of last welfare inspection	6/10/04

Brief Description of the School:

Witherslack Hall School is located in the village of Witherslack and has operated as a school for well over 30 years. There are extensive, well maintained grounds, which pupils use freely with a clear understanding of boundaries. The School is a member of the Witherslack Group of Schools; registered and approved by the Department for Education and Skills to accommodate 72 pupils aged between 11-19 years with special educational needs relating to emotional and behavioural difficulties. The boarding facilities are split into 8 living units that include two independent living units in cottages within the grounds. The School offers a post 16 provision with a purpose-designed programme to meet the needs of young adults.

SUMMARY

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

The inspection was announced and started at 9.30am. It took place over three days. The inspectors did a pre-inspection visit to the school to interview small groups of young people. This was in order to introduce themselves and to allow young people the opportunity to raise issues identifying what they felt the school did well and what they felt should be changed. Questionnaires were sent to placing authorities and parents/ carers to seek their views. Records were examined and meetings took place with key managers and groups of care staff.

What the school does well:

This is a school where young people are well looked after. Senior managers are very committed to providing quality education and care, which meets young peoples identified needs and is constantly looking at ways of improving their service. The school regularly reviews its practices and consults with other professionals. The school has a very robust recruitment procedure and training programme. Staff are very complimentary about the training opportunities they are provided with and are involved in regular supervision. There is a high percentage of staff with NVQ Qualifications and the remainder are in the process of completing their training. Both the senior management and the care staff team are highly motivated to embrace new initiatives. Questionnaires returned indicated that both placing authorities and parents/carers feel a high degree of satisfaction with the service and care young people receive and were very complimentary about staff. The school has already identified areas for improvement, which will further develop its service. Inspectors sensed a real enthusiasm and commitment from all staff in the way they attended to the individual needs of the young people.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The school had implemented all of the recommendations made following the previous inspection. The rolling programme of refurbishment, redecoration and personalisation of all living areas has made the school feel comfortable and homely. The school has continued to develop its care planning and individual risk assessments on young people.

What they could do better:

The school should continue with its further planned development of care plans. They should put into place the planned changes in the use of key worker sessions with young people. They should continue to review the way in which young people's unit meetings are held and recorded.

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 and 15

Young people's health needs were well met. Promotion of health was taken seriously and young people's welfare was safeguarded by the homes policies and procedures for administering medicines.

Young people were provided with meals that were nutritious, well prepared and encouraged them to follow a healthy diet.

EVIDENCE:

Inspectors looked at the health care plans and the systems for managing medication. Systems in place were effectively organised and monitored. Designated staff had responsibility for administering medication and the robust systems in place made sure that staff training in these matters was kept up to date. The schools policy and guidance for storing and administering medicines was comprehensive and was followed by all staff.

The school had effective arrangements to secure specialist medical services, including psychiatric and psychological advice, treatment and support to young people needing these services. Since the last inspection they had employed a full time Educational Psychologist and had contracted in the services of a CAMHS worker for 10 hours per week. These developments ensured that there was a comprehensive response to young peoples identified emotional health care needs.

Inspectors ate with young people throughout the inspection. The young people made favourable comments about the food provided. Menu's seen, and conversation with staff confirmed that the school had fully embraced healthy eating. The school promoted a healthy and nutritious diet for young people and young people were aware that staff were trying to teach the importance of healthy eating.

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

Relationships between staff and young people were good and created a supportive and nurturing atmosphere in which young people feel comfortable. Arrangements for complaints and dealing with bullying were handled well and ensured that young people felt listened to and protected. The behaviour management systems in place worked well and rewarded young people for positive behaviours.

EVIDENCE:

There were very good systems in place to promote the safety and well being of young people. All staff spoken to had a good understanding of child protection procedures and a rolling programme of child protection training for all staff had

been put into place to ensure that they had and maintained the skills to protect young people from abuse. A positive approach to managing young people's behaviour was central to the school's practice. There was a clear and comprehensive behaviour management policy, which was consistently used by all staff. Positive behaviours were observed to be praised as a matter of routine, unacceptable behaviour was calmly challenged and staff skills at diverting young people into involving themselves in positive activities were observed.

All physical interventions and sanctions applied were appropriately recorded by staff and monitored by management for any patterns or trends. There had been a significant decrease in the use of physical intervention this was felt to be as a result of the staff team developing increased skills at diverting young people's negative behaviour into positive activities.

The young people's guide advised whom they could go to if they were unhappy about something. It made it clear to them that as well as talking to staff within the school they could speak to a number of people who did not work at the school but who were concerned about their welfare.

There was a written policy to prevent bullying, with a good quality risk assessment of the times and places bullying was most likely to occur within the school and strategies to address this. All young people had completed a bullying questionnaire at the end of last term. The findings had been analysed and an action plan was being developed to address some of the issues raised by the young people. All young people spoken to felt that when bullying did occur staff dealt with it immediately.

Records of young people who go absent without permission were appropriately completed and monitored regularly by senior staff.

Staff recruitment files showed that the checks and references which must be in place to safeguard young people had been fully completed. Practice undertaken to achieve this was of a high standard.

The school had comprehensive health and safety policies and procedures. There were systems in place to regularly review the risk assessments, which had been made. A risk assessment of the building had been completed. Fire drills and checks on equipment were carried out within required timescales. The organisation had recently employed its own health and safety advisor, who was in the process of reviewing all risk assessments. Inspectors felt that suitable safety measures were in place to ensure that the school provided young people with safe and secure accommodation.

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

Young people routinely received individual support, physically, educationally and socially. Young people's involvement in education was actively promoted and encouraged. Young people were encouraged to take an active part in leisure activities.

EVIDENCE:

The inspectors observed young people routinely receiving individual support from staff members throughout the inspection. All young people had individual care and education plans (ICEP's) in place. These were comprehensive and set detailed educational targets for each young person. Plans were regularly reviewed and ensured monitoring of each young person's educational progress. Teaching and care staff work together to identify ways of encouraging each young person's educational and social achievements. On admission each young person is allocated a key worker who liaises with school staff, family, other professionals and outside agencies to ensure that education and care plans are implemented effectively and complement each other.

Young people were appreciative of the range and choice of activities available to them, both within the school and in the local community. Young people spoke proudly of the links they have developed with local community resources, particularly in relation to contributing by baking for local fund raising activities. Some young people also attended local army cadet, scouts and played rugby for a local team.

Appropriate risk assessments were undertaken on any out of school activities and staff leading out door activities held appropriate qualifications.

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

Young people were able to move into and leave the school in a planned and caring manner. The school had good systems in place for reviewing plans and targets that were in the process of ongoing review and further development. Good systems were in place to ensure young people maintained contact with their families and friends.

EVIDENCE:

Documentation seen showed that statutory reviews were taking place within the required timescales. Young people spoken to felt that they were encouraged to put forward their views and opinions at these meetings, ensuring that their voice was heard.

All young people had regular meetings with their key worker. The school were in the process of reviewing and revising the way in which key worker sessions were held in order to ensure that young people's assessed needs were reviewed and monitored more effectively. House meetings were held regularly, which staff and young people attended and where each young person was encouraged to raise any issues they may have about living on the unit. Staff acknowledged that these meetings were currently adult led but were working towards changing this.

Inspectors observed staff demonstrate an appropriate balance between the needs of individual young people, their wishes and preferences, and the needs of the group of young people resident on the unit. Staff were observed to manage individual behaviour in a positive and kindly manner and young people spoke very positively about the care and support staff gave them. All young people spoken to felt that they had been made to feel very welcome when they moved into their unit.

Young people have their needs assessed and written plans (ICEP's) detail how these will be met whilst they are at the school. The care part of the ICEP had been revised and developed since the previous inspection. The head of care, along with other senior staff, were working to develop these further to ensure that the progress of the actions taken to address young people's assessed needs was more effectively monitored. The further revision of the plans was to ensure that care staff completed them in a manner that ensured they were effective record of the work being undertaken.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

16,21,23,24,25

The school had systems in place to ensure that young people were able to wear their own clothing at the end of the school day. The rolling programme of refurbishment had improved the appearance of the living areas, enhancing the safe and homely atmosphere for young people.

EVIDENCE:

Inspectors, during previous inspections, had complemented the school on its comprehensive programme of 'Working Towards Independence', which had been implemented with all senior pupils. This had been further developed and young people were now able to undertake a BTEC in Life skills, Citizenship and Community. Some senior pupils spoken to were being supported to undertake courses at the local college. The school had developed strong links with the college and provided staff support to one young person during his college day. The school were working co-operatively with local authorities that had a statutory responsibility to develop Pathway Plans for looked after children.

Young people spoken to confirmed that after school they were able to wear their own leisure clothing. Both they and the school laundress confirmed that if young people needed additional leisurewear the school had a stock of clothing. The laundress tried to ensure that clothing provided by the school met current leisure trends.

Records and documents seen showed that young people received a weekly pocket money allowance.

The living areas presented as very pleasant, comfortable and homely. They were well furnished and decorated, with significant refurbishment of some units having taken place since the last inspection. There were sufficient baths, showers and toilets for the young people. All bathrooms were lockable and ensured young people's privacy. The young people were very proud of their living areas and of the support and interest staff also took in ensuring a homely atmosphere.

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 and 33

The school is well-managed and run efficiently- providing a safe and stable environment for the young people living there. The head of care is well supported and supervised by the head teacher and provides clear management for the care staff team. The care staff team demonstrate an awareness of their roles and responsibilities that ensures young people's assessed needs are being met.

EVIDENCE:

The school provided comprehensive details about the education and care it provided. A user friendly guide for young people and a separate guide for parents/carers advised of what it would be like to attend and live at the school. Senior managers and all other staff were very committed to providing high quality care for young people and were constantly monitoring and reviewing their practice to improve the service they were providing.

All matters that relate to general school records were seen during the course of the inspection. Accurate records of young people and staff were maintained and significant or important events were rigorously recorded on young people's files.

The school had a good training programme, which ensured that it was working to achieve an 80% qualified care staff team by the end of 2005. 67% of care staff held appropriate qualifications and the remaining staff, with the exception of two recent appointments, were all undertaking their training. The school had an annual training plan that ensured that the staff team had the appropriate training to meet individual young people's assessed needs.

Staff were benefiting from regular supervision, and informal daily support was a routine occurrence. All staff spoken to felt well supported. Staff morale was high, resulting in an enthusiastic workforce who worked positively with young people to improve their quality of life.

Staff meetings were held each week and minutes seen showed that issues of consistency of practice and care for young people were routinely discussed.

Records showed that regular monitoring of the school and its operation was also carried out through independent monitoring visits by the organisation. There was evidence that the school acted on issues raised during these visits to achieve a healthy, safe and protective environment for young people.

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

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	4
17	3
20	3

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

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	3
18	3
19	3
28	3
29	4
30	4
31	4
32	4
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)

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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