



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

Ripple Vale School

**Ripple Vale School
Chapel Lane
Ripple
Deal
Kent
CT14 8JG**

Lead Inspector
Mark Blesky

Announced Inspection
2nd March 2006 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	Ripple Vale School
Address	Ripple Vale School Chapel Lane Ripple Deal Kent CT14 8JG
Telephone number	01304 373866
Fax number	01304 381011
Email address	info@rippleraleschool.co.uk
Provider Web address	
Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school	The Headmaster
Name of Head	
Name of Head of Care	Mr David Bremner
Age range of residential pupils	10-16
Date of last welfare inspection	13. December 2004.

Brief Description of the School:

Ripplevale School is a residential special school, situated in the village of Ripple, near Deal, Kent. It is about ten minutes drive away from the main town, beach and facilities of Deal.

The school provides day and boarding education within a supported Learning Environment for up to 45 boys aged 10-16 years who are described as having emotional and behavioural difficulties. At the time of the inspection the principle explained to the Inspector that the school was operating with considerably less children. This has been a planned action and resulted in a comparatively stable and settled environment. The school has in this manner to appropriately assessed pupils whose needs can be met by the school and consideration can be made for the careful integration within the existing children group.

The school is set within its own large grounds and the boarding accommodation is contained within the main house. The residential provision is managed by a Head of Care, Deputy Head of Care and team of residential support workers, with the Head Teacher and two working Proprietors overseeing matters. At the time of the inspection there were 15 residential pupils and 8-day pupils. The school has achieved the Investors in People award.

SUMMARY

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

The school was inspected in the company of the Head of Care Mr David Bremner. Boarders assisted the tour of the boarding accommodation and were spoken to as a group. All areas of boarding and the common areas were visited. The report identifies that much renovation work is being undertaken and at the time of this inspection this continues.

Key staff members were interviewed and included the Head of Care, Principle, Bursar/Personnel Officer, Child protection co-ordinator.

Key standards were looked at this inspection and document, policies and guidelines were randomly sampled.

It was clear from this inspection visit that the school has responded very well to the last inspection report and as a result developed some insightful and thoughtful policy procedures and practice.

What the school does well:

The school has developed some very good food policies and procedures. Examination of these confirmed that practice has indeed benefited from this. The school clearly focuses on the boarders and this consideration appears to have successfully underpinned the resulting practice.

The school has developed an effective and supportive relationship with the commission and this was evident throughout the inspection and discussion with all staff.

Sampled documentation was generally of high standard and subsequent records made, demonstrated that staff had indeed thought carefully about the importance of the recording process.

This school has developed, and continues to strive with further development, towards practice to ensure the best opportunities are given to the children that board.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Much development has taken place since the last inspection and this is appropriately highlighted within the report.

Following the last inspection the school and key staff have set about reviewing and overhauling all policy, procedure and practice.

This has made a substantial difference to the school and the care that is afforded to the school. Most noticeably is the significant reduction in poor behaviour and reduction in physical interventions and absconding.

Discussion with the boarders suggests that children are generally happy to be in the school and clearly aware that if they are not, negotiation rather than

confrontation is the way forward. The Inspector believes this attitude is difficult to foster and maintain, but would suggest that the school have currently achieved this as the improvement in behaviour control suggests.

What they could do better:

Very few recommendations are made in this report and this clearly differs from previous reports.

Training to the required NVQ level has been identified as a shortfall, however planned training initiatives should address this shortfall.

Fire Safety needs to be more robustly monitored and although only minor shortfalls were noted, major ramifications can result in this area.

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

CONTENTS

Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Recommended Actions identified during the inspection

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

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

The elements of NMS 14 are present within health care and related documents. The head of care confirmed intimate care is not typically administered at the school and any consideration of this would be first risk assessed before any action was taken.

Children are provided with adequate quantities of suitably prepared wholesome and nutritious food, having regard to their needs and wishes, and have the opportunity to learn to prepare their own meals. Subject to dietary needs, children have a choice of main course at each main meal. Children are consulted over the planning of menus and encouraged to state their preferences for food and drink, which are taken into account wherever possible. The cook attends the children's meetings regularly to ascertain their preferences.

Boarders spoken to stated that meals and choice and quality clearly had improved and they viewed the appointment of the new cook as a positive move.

EVIDENCE:

The school has health care policy, which covers the health care needs of all pupils and boarders. This document describes the measures that the school takes to ensure health care needs are addressed and details responsibilities of staff to ensure healthcare is appropriately maintained. The head of care confirmed that the children's health care plans, which are kept in the schools surgery contain all necessary documentation in accordance with this standard. Sampled documents confirmed this.

The link worker staff member is primarily responsible for both general and specific health care needs and in this role liaises with all healthy care professionals and maintains health records for boarders. In this manner this person is able to clearly and consistently provide for each boarder without the need for all or several staff to become involved. The Head of care stated that

the health care policy is currently being reviewed along with all welfare documents.

The cook in the school is newly appointed and has in the children's opinion made some positive changes; this is evident in homemade cooking, more fresh vegetables, greater variety and consultation with the boarders.

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):

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

The school and staff respect a child's wishes for privacy and confidentiality so far as is consistent with good parenting and the need to protect the child.

Updates of all the policies have been achieved as identified in the previous inspection and this has also included updated boarder handbook and a new handbook for parents. These handbooks include the school rules, a mission statement, complaints policy and the core principles and procedures within the school. Children know how and feel able to complain if they are unhappy with any aspect of living in the school, and feel confident that any complaint is addressed seriously and without delay. There are systems in place in the school, which aim to prevent abuse of children, and suspicions or allegations of abuse are properly responded to.

Risk assessments are published by the school and have been designed in co-operation with an outside consultant. These risk assessments cover many

areas of care and include the whole school functions. Examples of risk assessment include. Danger from vehicles, outside and internal activities, contractors working, lunch, break times.

The Health and Safety Committee oversee all risk, which meets monthly. This is a new initiative and started in February 2006.

Fire risk assessments were noted to have been started and cover a comprehensive range of activities. At the time of this inspection matters of risk were at the stage of being identified and these will begin to be addressed at the next meeting in March 2006. Examination of these documents detailed that risk areas/sources have been identified.

It was however noted although risk had been identified it was not clear of the type of risk and indeed who would be at risk and the action that will be needed to remedy or minimise that risk.

Fire fault recording was not being recorded in the fire book and this needs to happen.

The school has a designated child protection co-ordinator who is responsible for liaison with the school and professional agencies. The co-ordinator has recently completed Local Authority Child Protection Training.

The school publishes an anti-bullying policy and procedure. The Head of Care stated that the policy is designed to meet the elements of the NMS following a recent review.

This policy is available and known to both staff and children, including agency, temporary and recently appointed staff. Children who are bullied are supported, and children who may bully others are also given suitable guidance.

The school have developed a sophisticated recording system to address bullying in conjunction with statistical data to ensure that staff target the areas and occasions when bullying is most likely to occur.

The school has a clear and appropriate written policy and procedures on the control, disciplinary and physical intervention measures which may be used at the school, which also emphasises the need to positively reinforce children for the achievement of acceptable behaviour.

Staff files were sampled and information was found to support good recording and completion of staff documents.

Recommendation NMS 8 that the current reporting matrix follows the schools procedure.

Recommendation: NMS 26 Records of faults regarding fire safety need to be recorded in the fire book and considered in fire risk assessment.

Recommendation: NMS 26 That fire assembly points are clearly marked and placed on the wall suitably affixed to avoid being removed.

EVIDENCE:

The school have published policies and procedures for staff to follow with regard to privacy and confidentiality. Boarders have access to their file records and have the opportunity to sign and agree records made about them.

Boarders have their own telephone in the house where they can make and receive calls and built the telephone kiosk in woodwork lessons. Some boarders have their own mobile telephones and can also make calls in private in the residential staff office, to their parents and social workers etc.

All complaints are taken seriously no matter what the subject and all complaints are recorded by the school and addressed.

A complaints form is completed by the staff members and child, this is then addressed if a solution or resolve can be found.

If the complaint appears or becomes more complex then the complaint is referred to the complaints officer. Investigation will then take place and the child will be informed of the process towards resolution.

Absconding for the school is currently zero, this has apparently been as a result improved relationship with the children. The head of care feels that increased stability and relationships has meant that children tend to seek staff support and advice rather than choosing to abscond from the school.

Another positive consideration is that restraints have also decreased significantly; this also appears to have resulted from increased awareness by staff into the needs of children through training and whole school initiatives. De-escalation techniques have been used and with the careful appointment of new staff, this is seen to have developed techniques and staff responses, reducing physical intervention.

The school's child protection procedures are consistent with the local policies and procedures agreed by the Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) relevant to the geographical area in which the school is situated. The school's child protection procedures have been submitted for consideration and comment to the local ACPC and, where appropriate, to the Local Education Authority and any comments taken into account in revising the school's procedures.

Staff files are maintained in the school and were sampled at the time of the inspection. Files sampled were well kept and maintained and contained the appropriate information on each staff member.

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):

12,22

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

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

EVIDENCE:

Care staff are familiar with the educational needs and progress of the children in their care, and they inform teaching staff of any information which will assist in supporting the child in school time. Staff contribute to the annual review of the statement by compiling a report that contributes to the educational needs of the child and participate where necessary the individual educational planning.

Conversation was held both with the young people and the school boarding staff. Discussions confirmed that young people received good support from staff members and appropriate liaison and consultation takes place between the boarding and school staff.

Young people stated that they received support and the house staff were considerate to their needs.

The school actively promotes the involvement of all children in social groups, counters isolation of individuals by others, and supports those children who for any reason do not readily fit in to the resident group.

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):

2,17,20

Children's opinions, and those of their families or significant others, are sought over key decisions, which are likely to affect their daily life and their future. Feedback is given following consultations.

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

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

EVIDENCE:

Children and staff confirmed that there are many provisions for children to communicate their views and wishes. Meeting with the children are held every day by staff. Individual one to one time is also regularly held with children. Complaints and representations are also recorded and responded to. The Principle has an 'open door' approach to the young people, which supports the support ethos of the school. Observation and discussions with the boarders clearly suggested that they were confident at making representations and their

opinions known. Parents and significant others are canvassed for their views both formally and through discussions at reviews and parental consultation occasions.

Care and educational files were sampled and offered both a useful profile of each child and more detailed information that specifically consider the assessed needs of each child.

As well as a telephone facility and the boarder's own mobile phones, letter writing is encouraged and email facilities are available.

Discussion with the head of care confirmed that the school considers the families and the importance of contact for each child.

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

Children are provided for adequately on an individual basis and encouraged to exercise their own preferences in the choice of clothing and personal requisites. Children who require assistance to choose what they wear and/or how they spend their money are provided with the assistance they need in a way, which maximizes their choices.

The school is located, designed and of a size and layout that is in keeping with its Statement of Purpose. It serves the needs of the children and provides the sort of environment most helpful to each child's development, and is sufficient for the number of children.

The school provides adequate good quality and well-maintained accommodation for boarding pupils, which is consistent with their needs.

EVIDENCE:

Discussion was held with the boarders and the Head of Care. It was confirmed by the boarders that they are able to express choice and personal preference over their clothes, their room decoration and their personal requisites. Children were noted to be wearing individual clothing outside of school time and each room inspected clearly demonstrated personal choice.

The whole boarding and common areas were inspected in the company of the Head of Care and two boarders.

Considerable renovation is underway and this includes all boarding areas and the shower/toilets and common areas. The Inspector has toured this building many times in the past and considers this the most comprehensive renovation that has occurred at the school. Some areas are either completed or nearing completion and these areas represented thoughtful insightful planning.

Consultation with the boarders was confirmed by them and it appeared to the Inspector that appropriate prioritising had taken place to address the key areas.

Consideration had been given to safety and disruption to the boarders and this confirmed a well-planned strategy.

The areas that are not physically being renovated had been assessed and in some cases new furniture had been purchased, carpeting or repainting and decoration has been completed or awaits completion.

With consideration for the ongoing work the home was found to be of general good standard throughout.

The Inspector and Head of Care discussed that this once completed will provide a major face-lift for the school building.

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):

1,19,28,31,32

The school has a written Statement of Purpose, which accurately describes what the school sets out to do for those children it accommodates, and the manner in which care is provided.

The Head of Care and Principle confirmed that the Statement of Purpose is being reviewed, and it was noted that the statement examined currently covers the main elements of this standard.

The school maintains clear and accurate records on the staff and child groups of the school, and major events affecting the school and children resident there. The Head of Care confirmed that the school is staffed at all times of the day and night, at or above the minimum level specified under standard 28.2. Records sampled of staff in the school demonstrate achievement of this staffing level.

Currently staff training is ongoing and at the time of this inspection training has not been completed. The Head of Care anticipates that with current training initiatives the staff will achieve this in accordance with this standard.

Examination of records discussion with the Bursar, Principle, and Head of Care and tour of the whole boarding area indicates that the school is financially sound with evidence of continued investment.

Systems, policies and procedures seen throughout the inspection demonstrate planning and review of documents and responses to childcare. Documents contained evidence where procedures may not have had the predicted result and therefore procedures had been reviewed with additional elements or stated alternate practices. In this way the school regularly and frequently reviews boarding welfare and childcare.

Recommendation: NMS 31

That 80% of care staff are qualified to NVQ 3 in accordance with NMS 31.

EVIDENCE:

A Statement of Purpose is published by the school, which is entitled the Philosophy of Care. This document addresses the elements of the NMS. The philosophy of the school is backed up by substantial policy, guidance and procedure for all staff to follow. The Inspector both examined this documentation at the time of the inspection and following the visit. The documents and records are generally well thought through, insightful documents that clearly consider the child as the primary focus. Records that relate to children's care are also generally well kept up-to-date and appropriately detailed.

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 this.

Staffing levels are therefore maintained in the school with additional on call facilities if needed. The school makes appropriate arrangements for the supervision, and where necessary, escorting, children on journeys arranged by the school, which are sufficient to meet the children's needs and provide reasonable supervision and control during the journey.

The school has considered and recorded the reasons for any high incidence or occurrence of undesirable circumstances. Action is taken to address this and policy and procedure reviewed to accommodate this action. Any consequential action necessary is carried out.

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	
Standard No	Score
14	3
15	4

STAYING SAFE	
Standard No	Score
3	3
4	3
5	3
6	4
7	3
8	3
10	4
26	2
27	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
Standard No	Score
12	3
13	X
22	3

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
Standard No	Score
2	3
9	X
11	X
17	3
20	3

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
Standard No	Score
16	3
21	X
23	3
24	3
25	X

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

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
1	8	Recommendation NMS 8 that the current reporting matrix follows the schools procedure.	20/06/06
2	26	Recommendation: NMS 26 Records of faults regarding fire safety need to be recorded in the fire book and considered in fire risk assessment.	20/06/06
3	26	Recommendation: NMS 26 That fire assembly points are clearly marked and placed on the wall suitably affixed to avoid being removed.	20/06/06
4	31	Recommendation: NMS 31 That 80% of care staff are qualified to NVQ 3 in accordance with NMS 31.	20/06/06

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