



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

**North Hill House School**

**Fromefield  
Frome  
Somerset  
BA11 2HB**

*Lead Inspector*  
**Pam Fletcher**

*Announced Inspection*  
**20th November 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

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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](http://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](http://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

<b>Name of school</b>	North Hill House School
<b>Address</b>	Fromefield Frome Somerset BA11 2HB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01373 466222
<b>Fax number</b>	01373 300374
<b>Email address</b>	sharone@nhh4as.co.uk
<b>Provider Web address</b>	
<b>Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school</b>	Farleigh Education Group
<b>Name of Head</b>	Andy Cobley
<b>Name of Head of Care</b>	Sharon Edney
<b>Age range of residential pupils</b>	7-18years
<b>Date of last welfare inspection</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> November 2005

**Brief Description of the School:**

North Hill house opened in September 1999. The school is one of a number of school's owned by Priory Education Services. It is approved under section 347(1) of the Education Act 1996 for students aged 7-18 with Asperger's Syndrome. It is purpose built and set in its own safe grounds on the outskirts of Frome.

The school is specifically designed for boys with Asperger's Syndrome and for a number of boys who have other additional support needs.

The school provides a thirty-six week placement, and provides both residential and day care. The premises include 6 small residential areas as well as a range of specialist classrooms.

Outdoor facilities are smaller than the previous school site. In addition there are restrictions in place regarding the amount of time outdoor facilities are used. (Due to planning restrictions young people can only use the playground until 6pm). The progress of proposals for the further development of outside recreational areas, including a sports hall were unclear.

In September 2005 two converted cottages in the town were opened to provide post 16 provision for young people. This offered support for older students working towards independence.

# SUMMARY

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

The inspection was carried out over the course of three days starting on the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2006. During the first two days Pam Fletcher and Deborah Turner, inspectors, did the site visits. A final visit was made by Pam Fletcher on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2006.

The inspectors undertook questionnaires with those students who were agreeable to this process. Students were supported individually by one inspector. Feedback to eleven pre inspection questionnaires was received from parents. Twelve Placing Officers also responded to questionnaires.

A very thorough tour of the school was undertaken with two young people showing the way around. Several meals were taken in the communal dining room with the staff and young people. The various residential (floor areas) were seen.

Four pupils files were seen, plus a number of the schools policy documents and central records. Two young people's prescribed medications were tracked and discussion was held regarding the policies and systems in place underpinning the administration of medicines and first aid.

A visit was made by one inspector to the school's off site sixth form provision.

A range of staff were spoken to both individually and in small groups. These included senior managers, care staff, senior care staff, catering staff and domestic staff. On the final visit individual discussion was had with two parents, the educational psychologist used by the school, a governor and one of the occupational therapists working in the school. The inspectors would like to thank all the young people and staff for their helpfulness during the inspection process.

## What the school does well:

The school provides excellent care management and education for young people who often have very complex needs, and in some cases who display extremely challenging behaviours. All staff spoken to and observed

demonstrated a high degree of motivation. Staff showed commitment to providing the best possible outcomes for young people and wanted them to be able to achieve their potential both academically and socially.

The majority of those parents who responded to pre inspection questionnaires were very pleased indeed with the way the school worked with them in planning care and education for young people. Comments received included "superb understanding of pupils needs" "I have been impressed 100% with staff at all levels. Quite exceptional" "He is in the best place to meet his needs, both emotionally, socially and academically"

Due to the day-to-day challenges posed by young people, staff were very busy. Despite constant activity there were clear systems, records, protocols and policies in place relating to planning care and education. Staff were clear about their roles and responsibilities and worked well together.

Files and records were well-maintained and confidential records locked away securely.

The standard of cleanliness was high and the building well maintained. The 'floor' areas had been personalised and provided 'homely' accommodation.

The catering staff provided excellent food, with an emphasis on promoting healthy eating options

## **What has improved since the last inspection?**

The medicines cupboard on 'Ash' had been removed following at the previous inspection where it had been noted hot pipes had interfered with storing medicines at the correct temperature.

The sixth form houses had been subject to the development of environmental and fire safety risk assessments.

One of the outside areas had been developed into a play area amongst the trees.

## **What they could do better:**

The school had grown in student numbers over recent years. Admissions of young people to the school had involved the management of some very complex needs. Many staff were very experienced. Their tasks and responsibilities had increased a good deal and it was reported that at times they felt overstretched and unable to achieve all the tasks they wanted or needed to undertake. Some staff felt that their views were not really taken into account. There were mixed views in relation to the level of approachability or response received from some senior managers. Thought needs to be given to the ways in which staff could be made to feel more valued and also to the speed of change and growth occurring in the school. For example consideration might be given to not increasing student numbers any further until the present numbers of young people taken into the school undergoes a period of consolidation.

The type of comments recorded in the sanctions log and the physical intervention log need to be reviewed. Records need to be more explicit.

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](mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk) or by contacting your local CSCI office. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.



# **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)

## **The Commission considers Standard 14 the key standard to be inspected.**

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

Quality in this outcome area is good. This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Health care needs were identified and met. The environment was well maintained and good quality meals were provided. Meals available encouraged young people to eat a healthy diet.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Four young people's files were tracked and two medical files viewed. Each young person had a clear and comprehensive health care plan, these plans included photographs. Any prescribed medicine given had been clearly recorded. Two staff gave and signed medicine sheets. A specific sheet was used to sign medicines into and out of the school from home. Authorisations from parents and those with parental responsibility were held. Young people were either registered with their own doctors in their home areas or with a practitioner in Frome. Where unplanned medical help was needed the school linked into local services. Young people who were taken ill were sent home as soon as possible. In the event that this was not possible young people reported being well looked after by staff.

Each floor area had its own locked medicine cabinet, held in a small, locked room. One person took overall responsibility for the systems and protocols in place. She reported receiving training from a local pharmacist in relation to specific medicines. It is advised that training is enhanced to include 'Safe Handling of Medicines' and that training is extended to include a small number of staff likely to be involved. At the time of the inspection a bound book was held. This had records of the numbers of paracetamol brought into the school.

In order to give a complete audit trail it is advised that a book be held in each floor area, with amounts given recorded alongside amounts left in stock. This was discussed and agreed with the CSCI pharmacist on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2006. It is recommended that full specimen signatures of staff giving medicines is held.

First aid boxes were placed at various points around the school. These were checked weekly. One was examined; this held the appropriate items, which were all in date. There were nine staff trained in first aid. A training list seen demonstrated that their first aid training had taken place over four days. The school was encouraging more staff to undertake training, and it was reported that at least one person, trained in first aid was present at all times.

At the time of inspection there were no young people needing help with personal care. Where personal care had needed support in the past, 'Intimate Care Plans' had been devised.

Where young people needed additional psychological and emotional support this was accessed through the use of a psychologist and a counsellor. Both visited the school regularly.

Main meals were eaten in the communal dining room and snacks were provided at suppertime in each of the residential areas. Food eaten during the inspection was delicious. The choices offered a nutritious balance with fruit and salads always available. Meals were orderly and took into account the needs of young people. For example some young people always sit in the same seat. Staff were very aware of needs and preferences. Young people reported being able to have a choice of foods and in general were very satisfied with the food. Menus were devised over a five-week period.

There were no young people with nut allergies, however there were some who were allergic to other foods. These needs were catered for. The mealtimes were pleasant occasions shared by staff and young people. All catering staff had received food hygiene training. The Priory Education group had recently undertaken an internal audit. Any shortfalls identified had been rectified or were being rectified. The catering staff had been without a supervisor and had not received supervision. Therefore it was commendable that the high standard of food served had been maintained. It was reported that a new appointment for the position of facilities manager had been made with a new person starting in January 2007. Hopefully this will ease the pressure that the catering staff were under at the time of inspection. The last environmental health report followed a visit to the school on 21st January 2003. In the main this was satisfactory.

Young people reported being able to get a drink at any time. Some took drinks to bed; others said they could speak to waking night staff should they need a drink.



# 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)

## **The Commission considers Standards 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 26 and 27 the key standards to be inspected.**

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

Quality in this outcome area is good. This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The young people at Northill House were shown respect by staff and given as much privacy as possible. There were systems, processes and protocols in place to protect young people from bullying and abuse. Notifiable events had been reported to the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

The school was proactive in ensuring the physical safety and security of the building.

Behaviour management was an important aspect of care provision. This area was given a good deal of thought and was well planned and managed.

The recruitment procedures were good, however, where it is possible contact should be made with previous employers, where new appointees have previously worked with children or vulnerable adults.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Due to the level of support needed for the majority of young people resident at the school a number of them required a high level of monitoring. For instance some young people were cared for on a one to one basis. Staff were sensitive to the need to combine this level of monitoring with a respectful approach, and to offer privacy where possible. One example was where staff knock on doors and wait for a response before entering. This was confirmed by records and by the young people spoken to. Due to risk factors staff routinely monitor young people closely at regular intervals throughout the night. Consideration might be given to basing this on a risk assessment approach. Where young people are not deemed to be at risk during the night this level of monitoring could be reduced. Staff demonstrated sensitivity when young people were in one or other of the 'Time Out' rooms. They were mindful of the need to ensure that the young people concerned could not be stared at by those not involved.

Confidential records were securely locked away. The young people had access to the telephone either in a booth or by using their own mobile telephones. Families reported being able to visit the school freely and were able to see their sons in private. The school had a clear room search policy should it be necessary to carry out a room search. This policy included the need to explain what was happening to the young person concerned.

The young people at the school had a complaints procedure. Any complaints had been responded to in a timely manner. Records of complaints and the responses to complaints were kept on file. Young people spoken to could all name at least one person who they could turn to if they were unhappy about anything. There was a list of help lines displayed near the young people's telephones. The number of the independent listener was also prominently displayed. Parents (those who responded to questionnaires) reported being told about making complaints. Serious complaints had been reported to CSCI.

The Senior Managers in the school were aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children from abuse. The schools child protection policies were clear and understandable. Staff reported receiving regular updates relating to child protection processes. Staff spoken to were

clear about their reporting responsibilities should a child protection concern arise. Child protection concerns, issues and complaints had been reported to CSCI and to local child protection officers and placing authorities. New staff reported being given an introduction to child protection procedures. It was noted that some policy documents need to be updated to reflect recent changes. For example social services needs to be altered to 'Children and Young person's Directorate.'

The school holds an anti bullying procedure and young people said that they could tell staff if they were bullied. Bullying had been identified as a problem by a small minority of respondents to questionnaires. This was discussed with the senior managers who explained that bullying does occur and is addressed. They explained that the young people's perception of what constitutes bullying is not always reflective of unkindness. For example one young person had felt bullied when another young person recently said 'how did you miss it' referring to a missed goal during football. Staff were vigilant in monitoring the well being of young people and maintaining a presence in all areas. The governor spoken to had been specifically asked to visit the school to consider the issue of bullying. She reported that she had not found a high level of bullying, but as a teacher herself acknowledges and understands that bullying does occur. Instructions to staff on a record sheet included a comment that staff needed to closely observe three young people to prevent bullying.

The school had supplied CSCI with clear Notifications of significant events. There had been one incident where the commission had not been informed.

A procedure was in place in the event that young people were absent without authority. This included an initial search followed by reporting to the appropriate authorities. Senior Managers said there had not been any incidents of unauthorised absences for a very long time.

Young people at the school had complex needs and in some cases displayed very challenging behaviours. Staff had devised individual behaviour management plans to deal with situations where young people lost control. It was pleasing to see that the young people themselves had contributed their views to these plans. For instance opting to go to one of the time out rooms should they feel anger and frustration. There was a good deal of emphasis on de-escalating situations, although for safety reasons physical intervention had been used quite regularly. Records of these incidents were clearly recorded. Any such incidents were reported to families who were very involved and kept up to date with events. During the first day of the inspection one young person was displaying very challenging behaviours and for safety reasons had to be taken to one of the 'time out' rooms. Staff were very sensitive to his needs for respect and minimized the numbers of people monitoring the situation. Two young people's records were tracked in relation to incidents that had resulted in the use of physical intervention. Incidents were clearly recorded. The need for more clarity in relation to comments recorded in the physical intervention

log was discussed at feedback to senior managers. For example staff often wrote "non compliance" as a reason for intervention. The full incident sheets demonstrated that the young people concerned had posed a risk to their own safety or to the safety of others. It is advised that comments made in the log reflect this.

Staff were trained in the use of physical intervention and had been given regular updates. One member of staff spoken to was very clear about exactly what staff could and could not do during an incident necessitating physical intervention. It was commendable that one member of staff who had been badly hurt a year ago still felt the confidence to work closely with the young person and family involved. The Head Teacher and The Head of Care were very involved in any high-risk situations and staff felt confident with the support generated by their 'hands on' approach.

Sanctions given were low level and appropriate, however the sanctions log contained some comments that related to actions or occurrences relating to incidents rather than actual sanctions given. For example comments included "restraint" and "time out." In order to fully comply with Standard 10.9 the sanction log should include a list of permitted sanctions, and whilst records should include details of the behaviour and circumstances leading to the sanction, the sanction itself should be recorded clearly.

The young people observed were encouraged to behave well and were given lots of praise for success. The school operates a merit system of reward. When a young person had received sufficient merits they were able to have a treat. The two young people leading the tour were awarded a merit for doing this so successfully. Boundaries were put in place in a sensitive but firm manner. For example young people were encouraged to behave well at meals.

One inspector met with the person (the health and safety coordinator) taking the lead role for Priory in relation to health and safety management.

The health and safety coordinator had a strategic lead in the implementation of the corporate policies, health and safety legislation and good practice guidance. He also took a lead role in monitoring the implementation of any update to policy, procedure and practice in line with health and safety legislation and good practice guidance. The coordinator was a member of the health and safety committee and provided written reports quarterly to the principle on any progress or identified shortfall in relation to the implementation of safety policy and procedures; both within and outside the school.

It was reported that the principle at this school was very proactive in maintaining health and safety and in ensuring compliance with legislative requirements.



Operationally within the school certain health and safety monitoring roles had been delegated, for example fire safety compliance and maintenance/coordination of equipment service and repair.

A range of generic environmental health and safety risk assessments were in place as well as those developed to meet individual specific tasks and events. Pupils had risk assessments in place for activities within and outside the school environment.

A uniformed format was being used to record risk assessments and these were well understood by those staff interviewed by inspectors. Documents examined as part of case tracking had been very well written and contained good evidence about perceived or actual risks and the measures required to minimise any identified hazard/risk.

The inspector examined records of servicing and maintenance for equipment and appliances. The landlord's gas safety certificate was examined and found to be in order. Fire equipment and appliances had been tested and serviced in line with good practice guidance. Fire alarms and emergency lighting were being regularly tested and serviced by a competent registered provider. Portable appliance testing had been completed and a full inventory was noted. Hot water outlets to basins, baths and showers were fitted with and controlled by thermostatic mixer valves and the maintenance person tested hot water. Where hot water was not thermostatically controlled for example in kitchens there were written risk assessments in place.

The inspector examined records of hot water tests. The hard wiring certificate was dated 2003 but was incomplete with only two of the twenty-four pages on site. The information was faxed and could not be easily deciphered. It was not possible to confirm that the hard wiring certificate was valid and that the hard wiring had been passed as safe.

National Minimum Standards suggest that hard wiring is re-tested at least every three years.

Pupils who assisted the inspectors during their tour of the school were very able to verbalise what to do on hearing the fire alarms and were keen to show inspectors where the fire exit routes were situated in various areas of the school. Regular fire drills were being conducted and the last planned drill had identified some shortfalls the senior member of staff coordinating fire safety compliance was reminded that an action plan to determine how any shortfall would be rectified was required.

The fire instruction for night staff required a minor amendment the member of staff coordinating fire safety was told at the time of the inspection what was required.

Staff had received training from personnel from the local retained fire station and fire fighters had visited the school to familiarise themselves with the site. A comprehensive folder had been developed that was kept at reception detailing all the fire zones within the school this would be handed to the chief fire officer in the event of a fire, to aid with prompt evacuation.

A policy for foreseen crisis management had been produced and staff had access to emergency telephone numbers.

Accident records were being maintained. The administrator was advised to contact the Health and Safety Executive concerning the storage of records of individual children and staff accident reports in order to ensure compliance with Data Protection guidance. The inspector examined the record of an investigation following an accident. This had been fully investigated and a comprehensive record produced by the health and safety coordinator.

The principle agreed to request the original hard wiring certificate or a satisfactory quality copy of this, and to ensure that there are no outstanding requirements.

Two staff recruitment files were seen. These were well organised and in general the recruiting procedure had been robust. CRB's had been obtained, and although staff had started training prior to clearance the Head of Care gave assurance, that they had not worked with children, until CRB clearance had been obtained. Three references were held and verification of references gained. It is advised that where staff have previously worked with children or vulnerable adults the school contacts previous employers to check the reasons the employment ended. (Standard 27.2 viii)

# 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)

## **The Commission considers Standards 12 and 22 the key standards to be inspected.**

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

Quality in this outcome area is good. This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Staff in the residential provision actively support young people in attending school and encouraged them to achieve progress.

Young people are encouraged to enjoy numerous activities, however, more adjacent outside areas would be beneficial.

The level of support given to individual children is very high.

### **EVIDENCE:**

Staff in the residential areas were very aware of the progress and development of young people academically. They supported them in preparing for school each morning. A number of Learning support assistants and teachers work some shifts in the residential care area and there is a good deal of overlap. Staff spoken to said that any difficulties that they need to know about are sent to all staff by e-mail. They reported routinely looking at e-mails before starting shift. In addition if there had been issues in school, learning support assistants reported that they would visit the residential areas and give a verbal handover of events. In the morning senior staff handover to teachers. In general staff felt the levels of communication between care and education staff were good.

The young people had access to numerous activities. Some activities involved a group of young people, whilst other young people attended their own specialist activity. For example one young person went to 'Fire Cadets' another to judo. Activities noted included football, swimming, walks, parks, cooking and playing on computers. There were numerous games and books available on some residential areas. Some parents felt that the amount of outdoor space was limited. The inspectors also found that the playground areas were restricted due to planning agreements. For example they could not be used after 18:00hours. Staff worked hard to compensate for this lack of freedom and young people were constantly taken out to parks and for walks. It was unclear whether or not proposals for a sports hall or indoor play area would go ahead. Such a facility either on site or very nearby would certainly benefit the young people and allow increased spontaneity for taking young people outside. It was noted that young people were transported either in one of four cars or in one of two mini buses. Staff said that more often than not the transport used is a car. It is unfortunate that one of the mini buses used still has a large area on it, which displays the name of the charitable organisation that gave the bus to the school. This undoubtedly labels the young people as different and potentially stigmatizes them within the wider community.

Staff demonstrated a sound knowledge of the young people's individual needs. Young people were given a nominated pastoral tutor as well as an academic tutor. Tutors took their roles and responsibilities seriously in order to ensure that young people were well supported. Those young people spoken to identified tutors as the people they could turn to with issues or concerns. Parents felt very involved with the majority of respondents reporting that the school works well with them to give support. The school also has its own specialist speech and language therapists and occupational therapists. The occupational therapist spoken to said that support is mostly given to young people in the classroom. She added that she was also increasingly giving advice to care staff. 'Social Stories' role-play and core stability programmes were all used to support young people. The occupational therapists also gave support to young people in developing independence skills. The educational psychologist used by the school was also spoken to. She said that the main aspect of her role is to advise staff. On occasions she had seen young people individually. She said that she feels that the school could use increased psychological support in order to undertake more 'systemic' work. She felt that young people coming to the school were increasingly complex. The school had appointed an independent listener. Although she had links with the school she was sufficiently independent, enabling her to offer young people support that they did not associate with school staff. Her contact number was prominently displayed.

# **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)

## **The Commission considers Standards 2, 17 and 20 the key standards to be inspected.**

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

Quality in this outcome area is good. This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Young people were encouraged to put their views forward and to be involved in the decisions made about their lives.

The relationships between staff and young people were mutually respectful.

The processes for admission and leaving the school were planned and thorough.

Young people's needs were assessed and individual plans and targets devised.

The level of contact between young people and their families concerned was very good indeed.

### **EVIDENCE:**

Young people and their families were fully involved in decision-making processes. This was demonstrated in records where young people had been involved in drawing up plans, in feedback from parents-where the majority felt that the degree of contact that they had with the school was exceptionally good. Young people spoken to reported being able to speak to staff and to have choices, for example over food and activities. The school also had a school council where young people could represent the views of others. Young people felt this was effective. One example was where their views on diet had been listened to. They had returned to having hot lunches. Meetings were also held on each residential area. Records seen demonstrated that young people had put their views forward at these meetings.

The relationships between staff and young people were very good. Staff knew the young people well, showed respect and put boundaries in place firmly but sensitively. There were numerous examples of where young people's needs took precedence over procedures. One example given was if young people do not like others to go into their rooms they are supported in cleaning it themselves. The staff observed worked hard to meet individual needs at the same time demonstrated an awareness of meeting the needs and dynamics of the whole group.

Prior to admission young people had undertaken a three-day assessment. The purpose of this was to assess suitability and to enable young people to experience what it's like to be at the school. One three-day assessment report was seen. This was a comprehensive document relating to all aspects of the three-day stay. Admissions were carried out at the pace at which the young person could cope with. Some young people could be introduced to the school in a very gradual manner. For example having one day and one overnight stay per week. One father spoken to reported that he felt extremely positive about all aspects of provision given by the school. He felt that the school was enabling his son to not only achieve academically but also to develop relationships with peers.

The senior staff were very aware of the difficulties posed by transition from the school. They were increasing the degree of independence training given to young people. This included gradually going out alone. Level one independence meant going to the shop with staff, level two going out with staff following and level three going out independently. Young people were also encouraged to clean, iron and have some opportunities to do cooking. Senior Managers at the school had developed good links with some local authorities in looking at the best options for young people leaving the school. A 'Connexions' worker had visited the school regularly.

Young people's needs had been assessed. Four young people's files were read, plus two box files, which contained educational information, correspondence and reports. Each young person had a clear placement plan devised by the

school. In addition target sheets were used to record daily progress. These sheets and targets were updated regularly. Documents seen were comprehensive and gave a clear picture of how care needs should be met. Each young person had a pastoral tutor who provided guidance and support. Reviews were held on a regular basis. Some of the records and plans needed to be dated and signed. Reviews were held regularly and comprehensive reports devised.

The majority of young people go home on a Friday and return to the school on Monday morning. When resident at the school they are able to contact their families by telephone. Where there were restrictions on contact this was clearly recorded on records. The contact between the school and the families who replied to questionnaires was in general exceptionally good. With parents feeling well informed and able to contact the school at any time.

# 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):

Quality in this outcome area is good. This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Young people had their own clothes, which were laundered by the school. Consideration needs to be given to how to ensure that the correct clothes are returned to individuals.

Young people were helped to prepare for transition into adulthood.

The premises were well maintained and clean. Furnishings were of a good quality.

There were sufficient bathroom facilities to offer young people privacy.

## EVIDENCE:

The young people were cleanly dressed and staff laundered their clothes. Some young people expressed frustration that their clothes get muddled up with other people's. The Head of Care explained that labels come off. Thought might be given to making the system of laundry more failsafe, perhaps by parents sewing on labels.



The school is located on the outskirts of the town centre with relatively easy access to local facilities. As previously discussed the play area outside is restricted due to local planning agreements. There is a small football area and in addition an area between trees had been cleared to provide further opportunities for play. The majority of young people had their own room with shower and toilet. A small number of young people shared a room with one other person. A bath was available for those needing it. All the residential areas had a sitting area and kitchenette where snacks were provided for supper.

The residential area was divided into six areas all within close proximity of each other. The furniture was of a good standard and the décor pleasing. The standard of cleanliness was high. Lots of pictures, photographs and drawings were in place making the residential area much more homely.

# 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)

## **The Commission considers Standards 1, 28, 31 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.**

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

Quality in this outcome area is good. This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The statement of purpose and supplementary documents provided a clear picture of what the school offers young people. The young person's handbook was excellent and provided a simple but comprehensive guide to young people.

Young people's needs were assessed and records devised. Progress was monitored and plans were updated accordingly.

There were records relating to young people and staff, held both electronically and in logbooks.

The staff were well motivated, received training and work hard to fully meet all the needs of young people.

Senior managers work well together and endeavoured to ensure that the best possible care was given to young people. Thought needs to be given to ensuring that all staff feel valued. Staff need to be able to approach senior managers, confident that any issues that they have will be fully taken on board without fear of recrimination.

Senior managers, senior care staff, care staff and ancillary staff seen were all highly motivated and demonstrated a good degree of competence in their roles.

The governors at the school were playing an increasingly active role and worked hard to ensure that high standards were maintained.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The school had a 'Statement of Purpose' 'New Kid's Handbook' and school prospectus. These documents had been updated regularly. The young person's guide was attractively illustrated and provided comprehensive information including what to do if concerned or worried. The Statement of Purpose needs to be revisited in order to replace NCSC with CSCI and update Child Protection details.

Four case files were seen plus two young people's 'box' files. Records were well recorded and provided all the information needed to inform practice. Accident and incident records were written on specific forms held separately to case records. Senior managers gave assurance that all records eventually get archived together, giving a complete record for each young person going through the school. Each young person had target sheets, which were used to record daily progress. These targets allowed staff to monitor progress and to update objectives as necessary. It was pleasing to see that young people had contributed to their own plans.

The school kept a register of young people coming into the school. Details were also held electronically. (Not seen at this inspection).

Two new staff personnel files were viewed. These were well organised and demonstrated a fairly robust approach to recruiting new staff. (Discussed further under Standard 27)

The school logs all accidents in two accident books, one for staff the other for students. The student log was viewed.

Recent menus and duty rosters were seen. Visitors were signed into and out of the school in a very thorough manner, including being taken through the process of evacuating the building in the event of fire.

Staffing arrangements for each of the floor areas were held on file. The arrangements for staffing at night were for three 'waking' night staff to be on duty in the main school, and for one waking member of staff to cover the two sixth form houses. Staff felt that the level of staff was adequate, however it was reported that staff sickness at times caused pressure for those staff on shift. Since the last inspection staff had started to work in allocated teams on the same floor area. Staff felt this allowed for them to offer each other more support and also provided a more consistent approach to caring for young people. Senior staff provided on call support on a rotational basis.

Staff had received induction training and then an ongoing programme of training, which included a wide variety of subjects. Staff appreciated the training received and also said that they were encouraged to put their own views on training needs forward. Ancillary and catering staff had been included in child protection training and Aspergers Syndrome training. Senior managers reported being keen to improve the level of staff achieving NVQ level three. One of the newer senior managers is experienced in the NVQ process and is a verifier; hopefully this will increase the numbers of those achieving the award. The school also provided Priory Education Services training 'Foundation for Life.' This was interactive and staff reported finding it interesting. The training included varying modules some of which were compulsory.

Staff spoken to during the inspection were competent and caring. All staff demonstrated a good awareness of their roles and responsibilities. Staff were highly motivated and without exception demonstrated a positive attitude towards young people. Staff were mixed in experience, with new staff feeling very well supported by more experienced colleagues. Senior staff meetings were held regularly. One inspector observed one such meeting. All residential areas were represented. Discussion ranged from individual young people and strategies for managing behaviours to residential area management and long term planning.

The majority of staff spoken to had received regular supervision, however it was noted that one relatively new member of staff had not received supervision fortnightly during the probation period. In addition ancillary and catering staff had not received supervision. A supervision list was viewed and in general supervision levels were regular amongst care staff. A new appointment had been made to oversee catering facilities and hopefully this will mean that catering and cleaning staff receive the supervision and support

that is needed. Care staff felt that they offered each other a high degree of support; this was reflected in the teamwork observed during the inspection. The senior managers worked closely together and staff found them very supportive when issues amongst young people arose. As discussed in the summary of this report there were mixed views on the personal support received from senior managers. The school is an extremely busy place, with the welfare of young people made a priority by all concerned. Nevertheless senior managers might consider ways to enable all staff to feel confident in raising any issues. Consideration might be given to team building and other methods of empowering staff.

Crisis management plans were seen.

The Head Teacher and Head of Care worked closely in monitoring records devised in the school. It is advised that when records are monitored they are also signed.

One of the governors was met during the inspection. The governing body had become increasingly active during recent years. It was pleasing to see that senior managers had requested that governors come into the school to look at specific issues. Recently two such issues had been looked at. One relating to potential bullying the other to look at diet. Reports had been generated as a result of these visits, however they were not available during the inspection.

# 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>
<b>14</b>	3
<b>15</b>	4

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

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

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

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>16</b>	3
<b>21</b>	3
<b>23</b>	3
<b>24</b>	3
<b>25</b>	4

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

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	RS14	It is recommended that records relating to the storage and stock balance of non- prescribed medicines be retained in each residential area. This would provide a clearer audit trail of medicines held and administered.	
2.	RS10	It is recommended that records made in log – books, of both sanctions and incidents of physical intervention are reviewed. Sanctions need to be recorded in line with Standard 10.9.  Records of incidents necessitating the use of physical intervention need to incorporate all matters listed under Standard 10.14. This relates to comments such as ‘non compliance’ as a reason for the use of physical intervention, rather than more explicit details of what circumstances lead staff to intervene.	
3	RS13	It is recommended that further consideration be given to decreasing the limitations on outdoor space, in order to enable pupils to expend their excess energy.	
4.	RS3	It is recommended that the practice of routinely checking young people at night is based on a risk	

		assessment approach. (This relates to the current practice of going into rooms and checking on all the young people)	
5	RS26	It is advised that the principal request the original hard wiring certificate or a satisfactory quality copy of this, and to ensure that there are no outstanding requirements.	
6	RS30	It is recommended that all staff receive regular supervision. (Standard 30.2.) This relates to the supervision needed for ancillary staff.	
7	RS32	It is recommended that the Head Teacher or senior staff sign the records that they monitor. (Standard 33.2)	



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