



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

### **Skilts School**

**Gorcott Hill  
Redditch  
Worcestershire  
B98 9ET**

*Lead Inspector*  
Warren Clarke

*Key Announced Inspection*  
14th June 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

<b>Reader Information</b>	
Document Purpose	Inspection Report
Author	CSCI
Audience	General Public
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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>	Skilts School
<b>Address</b>	Gorcott Hill Redditch Worcestershire B98 9ET
<b>Telephone number</b>	01527 853851
<b>Fax number</b>	01527 857949
<b>Email address</b>	
<b>Provider Web address</b>	
<b>Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school</b>	Birmingham City Council Education Department
<b>Name of Head</b>	Mr Charles Herriotts
<b>Name of Head of Care</b>	Mr Anthony Pridding
<b>Age range of residential pupils</b>	5 – 11 years
<b>Date of last welfare inspection</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> June 2005

## **Brief Description of the School:**

Skilts is a Residential Special Schools for primary age boys with Emotional, Social and Behaviour Difficulties with associated Learning Dificulties. It is situated just ouside Reddith, in Warwickshire; it is approximately five miles from the Birmingham boundery and is controlled by Birmingham Local Education Authority (LEA). It is opened on weekdays and term time only, and is equipped for 50 pupils during the school day and 30 on a residential basis each night. Residential pupils stay 1,2,3 or 4 nights a week, depending on their needs. Children are usually placed at the School by Birmingham LEA, but it is sometimes used by neighbouring LEAs. Children who are paced at the School have usually experienced major difficulties in other in mainstream schools or other settings; are likely to have experienced exclusion on either a temporary or permanent basis and therefore have had time out of regular school.

# SUMMARY

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

The inspection was conducted over two consecutive days one of which coincided with a school trip and the other when some staff training was taking place. Although on this occasion, none of the children were interviewed the inspectors had informal conversations with some and attended a whole school assembly.

In addition to the direct observations, examination of records and case tracking exercise, the inspection findings draw on information from a questionnaire completed by 10 pupils and interviews with staff including members of the school's senior team. Account was taken of information provided in a pre-inspection questionnaire completed by the Head of Care and a self-assessment form completed by the Head teacher detailing his judgement of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The person who acts as the school's independent visitor (someone independent of the school who the children can talk to) kindly made himself available to be interviewed by one of the inspectors.

Account has also been taken of the findings at the last inspection and a survey of pupils and parents, which the education authority responsible for the school (LEA) conducted some four months prior to the inspection.

## **What the school does well:**

The school performs well in all the areas in which it has been assessed, except for some minor deficits, as set out in the recommendations and which can be easily remedied. It is, however, particularly successful in creating a caring environment in which the children are accepted and made to feel safe. This caring was seen both in the ways staff treated pupils and the behaviour of pupils towards each other. This is borne out by all or most of the pupils indicating, in our survey and the one conducted by the LEA, that they like staying at the school; they are properly cared for by staff who treat them well and in an environment where they get privacy when they want it and in which they feel safe.

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

There were a number of recommendations at the last inspection, but the main concerns were:

- where the medicine cabinets were being kept was deemed unsafe;
  
- the locks on bathroom and toilet doors being too high so that some pupils might not be able to reach them;

- need for better security against intruders near to the play ground; and,
- the grim appearance of the main building for lack of being repainted.

All these issues have been attended to successfully.

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

Although the school serves the children well in all the areas in which it was assessed - for example their health, supporting their education and individual difficulties such as getting on with other children – there is scope for improvement in the following areas:-

- i). The plan that sets out what the children's needs are and what is to be done to meet them and how successful what is being done is, needs to be clearer.
- ii). In addition to the plan for re-decoration of inside residential units, some repainting of the woodwork on the outside of the rear of those units is necessary and some seating which has become worn needs to be repaired or replaced.
- iii). Work towards achieving the target of 80% of care staff gaining the minimum qualification for their jobs.

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.

# **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

Children who spend time in residence at the school continue to benefit from the effective contribution that it makes in addressing their existing health care needs and the measures it takes to promote good health.

### EVIDENCE:

It remains the case that care is taken to establish the children's health histories and to get an accurate understanding of their health needs and how these are to be met while they are resident at school. A School Nurse, whose credentials were previously checked provides the lead in this regard and gives care staff such information and guidance as they need to care for the children appropriately.

It was observed from the sample of three cases which were closely examined and other children's records which were seen, that in all cases there was clear information about their health, medical authorisation, where relevant and sufficient information about any existing medical or other condition that they have to enable proper planning and delivery of their care.

The children have access to a GP should they become ill whilst at school, but in the normal course of events their parents or permanent carers retain full responsibility for their health and they receive their primary health care from services within their own community. The observations made here are therefore within the context of most of the children spending only one or two nights as boarders at the school. It was encouraging to learn both from the Head teacher's Self Assessment questionnaire and interview that though some children at the school might benefit from better access to the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services, positive developments are being considered in this connection.

In light of some children's existing medical or other diagnosed conditions, they are on medication regimens, which require the school to store and administer

medicines safely. The inspectors made checks in this regard and found that the medicine cabinets had been placed in safer locations as recommended at the last inspection and the Head of Care reported that since the last inspection, he reviewed the medication procedure and together with the School Nurse are monitoring this more rigorously. The inspectors found no cause for concern in school's medication procedure or practice in regard to storage and administration. Whilst inspectors did not examine in any depth the transfer of medication between home and school, we did not see any risk assessment in this regard and would suggest that if such an assessment has not been done it ought to be so that if any risks are identified the necessary control measures can be taken.

At the last inspection evidence was provided of there being sufficient numbers of staff trained in first aid so as to be able to deal appropriately with minor injuries and to recognise and respond to those which are more serious. There has been no change in this regard and the Head of Care advised the inspectors that arrangements have been made for all care staff to receive training in Infection Control during the week when the inspection was conducted. The accident record was examined and revealed no extraordinary incidents.

The school, which retains its Healthy School status, continues to promote healthy lifestyles to the children through diet, as seen by a current menu, displayed in one of the residential units. It was also noted that this theme is carried on in introducing the children to the benefits of vegetables by engaging them in a vegetable garden at the school. The children, during playtime, were seen to be encouraged to become engaged in active pursuits and this is also reflected in the records and what the children said about after school activities.

The Head of Care presented a document at inspection, which sets out work being done to demonstrate what the school does to promote the children's health within the terms of the outcome framework set out in *Every Child Matters* and the National Minimum Standards. This confirmed what the inspectors observed and have outlined above, and what the school plans to do in future to enhance its contribution to both the physical and emotional health of the children. This is an area in which there is clear joint working between the teaching and care staff.

The children who responded to a questionnaire were positive in their views about this aspect of care unanimous in indicating that they feel well cared for, that they are treated well and that they get privacy when they need it. This was also reflected in their rating of the quality of the food.

# 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 and 27

Children benefit from a wide range of measures to ensure that they are safe within the school's environment and can be secure in the knowledge that all reasonable safeguards have been put in place to protect them from abuse and unfavourable treatment.

## EVIDENCE:

It remains the case from the records examined, discussions with staff and direct observation that the school is ensuring the privacy of the children and confidential of information it keeps about them. For example, staff members know from training and practice and have access guidance about sharing personal information about the children including that related to child

protection. It was also observed that all records with children's personal details are securely stored.

All the children have their own bedrooms and bathing and toilet facilities that ensure their privacy. The Head of care reported that locks on bathrooms and toilet doors had been repositioned to a height that makes them accessible to all children, as recommended at the last inspection. No practices were observed, which might be considered an avoidable compromise of the children privacy. Instead there was evidence of clear guidance in the school's *Routines and Common Practices* of how staff members are expected to act to ensure that privacy is maintained so as to preserve the children's dignity and at the same time promote safe caring. For example, discreetly supervising ablutions, knocking on bedroom doors before entering and following certain protocols when also with a child or assisting with any intimate care as might be required.

Although all the children are male, there is a balance of gender in the staff team so that the children have some choice in who assists them with their personal care. A telephone is provided for the children's use and this is in a location that enables calls to be made in private. It was also noted that there are comfortable and welcoming facilities, which can be used for the children to have contact with relatives or meet with official visitors in private.

One of the means by which the school seeks to protect children is through the complaints procedure, which has not changed since the last inspection when it was deemed acceptable. A register of complaint is maintained and on examination did not reveal anything of concern, but rather demonstrated that when complaints are made they are taken seriously and dealt with accordingly. The complaint procedure is sufficiently promoted in school and is in a form appropriate to the children's age and understanding. It is supplemented by other measures such as access to an Independent Visitor and promotion of independent organisations concerned with the protection of children such as Childline. As on previous occasions, all the children who were surveyed said that they know how to complain. This is largely in keeping with the LEA's own study.

The school has a clear child protection procedure, which has been validated by LEA responsible for it and by the Area Child Protection Committee in whose area it is located. Accountability for, and co-ordination of, child protection in the school is clear, there is evidence that all those employed have received awareness training to understand the nature of abuse and the role that they are expected to play in contributing to the protection of the children. Evidence of child protection issues, which the school reported to the Commission were seen to be reconciled with the relevant records at the school. Evidence from the process of responding to allegations with child protection implications since the last inspection confirmed that the school's procedure works effectively when it is invoked.

A well-established anti-bullying policy in the school and an ethos of care and concern, which has been fostered among the children over time has resulted in bullying not being a significant issue. There is recognition that known behaviour and vulnerability of some children means that staff members have to be alert to bullying and the level of supervision, which the inspectors saw confirmed that this is happening. There were no obvious areas within the school or circumstances such as monitor systems, in which children might be bullied. Whilst bullying is not a significant problem, the records show that there are occasions when some children are in conflict with each other and the school seeks to equip children in these situations with human relations skills through Circle Time, assemblies and PHSE lessons. Members of care staff have been observed do this as opportunities present themselves in the normal give and take relationships of communal living. For their part, 100% of children who responded to the questionnaire about their care experience said that they feel safe at the school and 80% indicated that they are not bullied. This is borne out by the outcome of a study conducted by the LEA in March 2006.

At the last inspection the school's approach to behaviour management was assessed and judged acceptable. Parents who responded to a questionnaire then said that they were aware of how the school was managing their children's behaviour and considered the sanctions that they sometimes use to be reasonable and fair. The Head of care reported that the behaviour management policy has not changed since the last inspection. Further, it was noted that the critical observation made last year in relation to reconciling the record of sanctions in the children's personal files with the log kept in each residential unit has been addressed. Of those sanctions, which have been imposed, the inspectors consider that they were within the permissible range they were proportionate and appropriate to the children's age and understanding. Whilst it was observed that the number of physical restraints of pupils had increased this was in proportion to the increase in pupil numbers. Where it was necessary to intervene physically a detailed record is kept in each instance and the child is encouraged to contribute to it. Information in those records shows that children are only physically restrained when they are at risk of causing injury to themselves or others. It was inferred from their report of feeling safe at the school that they were not being harmed in restraints and may even derive some feeling of safety in knowing that staff will act to protect them when they put themselves and others at risk.

At the last inspection a comprehensive fire risk assessment had been carried out reportedly under the supervision of the Local Authority Fire Officer. At that time the latest Fire Service inspection report declared that all aspects of fire safety against which the school was inspected were satisfactory. The Head of Care advised that since then the Fire Office has reviewed the risk assessment and has suggested some additional control measures. At the time of inspection a new fire alarm system was being fitted in two of the residential units.

In response to the concerns that the inspectors raised at the last inspection in relation to perimeter security at the school and views expressed by some children in the LEA's survey, measures were taken to address those concerns and the perimeter of the premises is now much more secure.

All the usual security measures have been taken to deter intruders and access to the school is controlled. It was observed that visitors are required to identify themselves and are kept under supervision whilst on the school premises.

The school ensures that those it employs are subject to the required vetting, including Criminal Records Bureau checks, to ensure that they are fit to work with children. A check was made of the documentation that the school is required to keep in this connection and they were found to be in order.

# 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 and 22

The school fulfils its obligations to the children by ensuring that those for whom residential education is prescribed benefit from a unified approach in which the residential care provision enhances their formal education and, together, provide any individual support that they need.

## EVIDENCE:

On this occasion it was not possible to observe the children in after-school activities. This is because the inspection took place on the day of a school trip and when the children who are usually resident returned home for the weekend. However, in interviews with the Head teacher and the Head of Care and examination of records and data from questionnaires, it has been concluded that the residential care aspect of the school continues to make a valuable contribution to the formal education of the children for whom this is prescribed.

The obvious ways in which the children's education was being supported are in their being presented to their classrooms on time having been well rested, fed and prepared. The residential care staff members act as an effective bridge between the school and the children's own homes, which elicited some of the following comments from parents and carers in the survey that the LEA conducted earlier this year:

*"My son has been very happy at Skilts and I feel confident that they will deal effectively with any behaviour and incidents that arise – this being a first for me. It has been an enormous relief in terms of practical support that I can rely on".*

*"Since joining Skilts, there has been a remarkable change in my son. His residential status is especially beneficial as he is an only child. He doesn't mix too well with local children but seems to get along well with his local housemates at school."*

*"He is now far more sociable than he has ever been – before he was withdrawn and a worrier".*

Residential care staff have attempted to use the objective in the children's statements of special educational needs as a basis for a care plan for those children who are residents. This is still in a process of development as assessed by the inspectors and recognised by the Head of Care. Progress in this area might be accelerated and made more effective if each child's statement were to spell out more specifically how the boarding aspect of the school placement is expected to contribute to his formal educational objectives.

The inspectors saw that there remains a reasonable selection of books, toys and games in the residential unit, providing the children with recreation pursuits, which directly or indirectly promote and reinforce learning. Computers are also available to the children in the residential unit and are used as an aid to learning both formally and informally. Generally the children are not set homework, but the Head teacher said that where children's teachers deem that aspects of a particular child's schoolwork need to be reinforced at home, e.g., reading, the residential care staff support this. Further they work collaboratively with teachers in some aspects of curriculum concerning health and social care. The inspectors noted that members of care staff were involved in school assemblies and contributed to the recognition and validation of pupils' efforts and behaviour within the school. The school's common purpose is promoted through joint staff meetings and training such as child protection training, which has been observed in the past.

Although the inspectors did not ask the children directly whether the care staff support their education, clues as to how they regard this come through in their response to the item on our questionnaire, which asked: "Do you like staying here and are you happy"? All except one of the respondents indicated that they like it at the school and are happy there and in some cases offered comments such as: "It's a good school and I like it"; "I like it at school – it's the best school...".

The inspectors concluded that children are being provided with the individual support that they need. This is reflected in their records, which identify their particular difficulties such as specific behavioural problems and the strategy for addressing them. It was observed that there are children of different racial origins who are in the minority, but are fully integrated. In promoting these children's identity, religion and culture, the Head of Care said that the school becomes involved in events such as Black History month and draws on the



LEA's resources in this regard. Currently there are only two members of staff of non-UK/European origin and the school would like to recruit more by way of providing support to some of the children through, say, more black members of staff as role models. However, despite its best endeavours the location of the school is believed to act as a barrier to this.

It was observed that both teaching, residential and support staff members are approachable and the children related to them in a relaxed and trusting manner. This applies to senior staff who were seen to make themselves available in informal settings such as the play areas, where children frequently approached them. It was inferred from this that staff pupil relationships are such that the children would feel able to approach any member of staff with any concerns that they have. The parents' comments cited above including that referring to how much more sociable their child had become and the following one also confirm the school's effectiveness in providing individual support:

*"Since leaving mainstream school (where my son was excluded most of the time) he got his statement and was lucky enough to go to a special educational needs school, where he has made great progress. For the first time he enjoys going to school, his behaviour and confidence have improved, he is not feeling like the odd one out. The changes are immense. Can't fault the school at all. Best one yet".*

At the last inspection we reported on the appointment of an Independent Visitor who visits the school on a weekly basis. At that time the visits were on one set evening which meant that some children were unlikely to benefit from this service. It was therefore encouraging to learn on this occasion that the visits are now more varied so that all the resident children have the opportunity to meet with the independent visitor if they wish. The LEA's survey, which among others asked pupils whether there was someone at school they could go to if needed help with a problem revealed that all pupils indicated they felt that they had someone to go to if they had a problem. The survey found that the children not only knew the Independent Visitor, but they also understood his role, which is promoted on an ongoing basis with posters about the service in the residential units.

## **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 and 20

The school encourages children to understand their own circumstances and to contribute to decisions about how these are to be addressed both in the long term and on a day-by-day basis. It also provides the children with opportunities to comment and, as relevant, influence how the school is run.

Reasonable care is taken by the school to understand the children's difficulties and needs and to establish acceptable strategies in response to these. The care planning system, as recognised by the school's senior staff, needs to be made more effective so that there are clear links between the needs identified, the interventions to meet them and the effectiveness of those interventions in terms of outcomes for the child.

### **EVIDENCE:**

The children's placement plans and particularly documentation of their contribution to the review of their statements of special education needs, provide evidence of their involvement in the process of planning and review of their education and care. The admission process in the school actively engages parents and children and is yet another example of the attempts made to ensure that the child and his parents are involved in the decision-making process.

In examining the documents referred to above, no evidence emerged to suggest that there has been any unreasonable overriding of the children wishes.

The way in which children are enabled to influence how the school is run is reflected in the house meetings in which their views are sought on the routine activities such as décor, furnishings and ideas for after school pursuits. There is a School's Council to which children are elected and consulted on issues about the running of the school. Evidence of how children's opinions and views influence the way the school is run is reflected in the measures set out in an action plan following the survey, which was conducted in March. For example, some pupils said that they felt less safe in the playground and were concerned about a gate to the premises that was not secure, a factor also highlighted by the inspectors at the last inspection. In response those in charge of the school have staggered break times and arranged for a more secure gate to be fitted.

As mentioned earlier, there is in the form of the statement of special educational needs and the assessments that contribute to it, in each case, evidence of the children's individual needs being assessed. Where children are admitted to the school on a residential basis the care staff develop on an individual basis a plan intended to set out how they will meet each child's care needs. This care planning process was recently introduced at the time of the last inspection and was deemed acceptable as an approach to planning, but was being applied with varying degree of skill and effectiveness. On examination of some children's records in the case tracking process, it was found that the case planning process is still variable in how it is documented. It was not always clear from daily notes, the care that children are receiving and its relationship to the objectives in their written plan.

In the case of the children who are resident, the school recognises the importance of them being able to maintain contact with their families and people who are important to them. It has therefore made provisions – in the form of a visiting suite – for children to be visited by relatives at school and has made available telephones which enables the children to make and receive calls. It has been noted from the records that the school co-operates with social services in both facilitating contact for some looked after children and in conforming to restrictions on contact where it has been officially imposed. Considering contact in its broader sense parents, from the responses to the LEA'S survey and in previous response to surveys administered by the Commission, consider that the school maintains good contact with them regarding their children. They find the school welcoming and the Head teacher and staff helpful. It did however appear that some would welcome restoration of the system of the Home/school communication book and to be given more opportunities to be informed of their children's progress.

# Achieving Economic Wellbeing

## The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

23 and 25

The school provides a pleasing and comfortable environment for all the children and accommodation, which is properly equipped, homely and fit for those who are resident. This includes facilities that afford the children privacy and permits their care to be conducted in ways that preserve their dignity.

## EVIDENCE:

Located in the countryside in ample grounds and surrounded by farmland, the school environment is pleasing, safe and healthy. As mentioned earlier, deficits in the perimeter security, which were of some concern at the last inspection have been rectified and the external repainting and replacement of some windows in the main building has transformed its appearance. It now presents as welcoming rather than the hitherto foreboding appearance.

There is a disused building on the site, which was formerly used as boarding accommodation and is now becoming derelict. It is boarded up and apart from its unpleasing appearance it does not currently present any obvious risk to the children. However, since there is no plan of what is to be done with it, those responsible for the school will need to assess, on a regular basis, the risk to the children if the building is to be left to deteriorate further.

The grounds are well maintained and actual play areas are safe though where there are paved pathways including those adjacent to the main play area, some of the paving is uneven and presents a trip hazard. There are a number of trees in the school grounds, some close to school buildings. The Head of Care reported that the condition of these trees has been checked for safety by the Local Authority since the last inspection.

The children's residential accommodation is provided in two semi-detached buildings separate from the classrooms and forming four living units each being completely self-contained with exclusive seating, dining, bathrooms, toilets and bedrooms. These units are equipped so that they are domestic in scale and are furnished and adorned to create a homely appearance. The condition of some of the units is good in regard to décor, furniture and fittings. The Head of care explained the planned maintenance arrangements, which have already been put into effect. This scheme of works, if implemented, should ensure that where the decoration, furniture and fittings are currently acceptable, the timely upgrading proposed should ensure that they do not become unacceptable. However, the following was considered to need prompt attention:

- I) The sofas in Owl unit are worn and need to be replaced.
- II) Some bedrooms in Owl unit require redecoration
- III) Sections of guttering around the Woodpecker/Owl building are clogged with vegetation and need to be cleared.
- IV) The woodwork on canopies at the rear of the units needs repainting.
- V) Minutes of a staff meeting held on 12/05/06 suggest that restrictors on some bedroom windows were broken. The inspectors did not examine all the bedroom windows to confirm whether this is still the case thus this needs to be rectified if it has not already been done.

It was observed that the configuration of the children's living accommodation remains as described at the last inspection. It continues to afford each child his own spacious bedroom, which is equipped for private study if required. Staff sleeping in accommodation is close to the children's bedrooms in each unit so that they can feel safe in the knowledge that an adult is nearby throughout the night and to enable staff to respond quickly to any difficulties that arise during these times.

The bathroom and toilet facilities are provided in an acceptable ratio to the number of children accommodated and they are designed and equipped to ensure the children's privacy when conducting their ablution and toilet. Throughout the residential units were found in clean and orderly condition save

for where rewiring work was in progress. Beds and bedding were examined and were also found in a clean and sound state.

In our survey the children did not make any critical comments about the residential units and in the Local Authority survey they only mentioned provision of more play-stations computers in their suggestions for improvements. In both surveys the children overwhelmingly reported being happy and content at the school and from this it is reasonably assumed that they are satisfied with the accommodation.

# 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):**

29, 30 and 31

Children at the school benefit from a unified education and care system underpinned by effective management and successful in establishing sound child care principles and practices. This success is, in large measure, achieved by the efficient deployment, training and development of staff at all levels.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The Head of Care takes responsibility for designing and overseeing the implementation of induction training for new staff. This includes their familiarisation with the way the school is run and such training as is required to ensure that they are caring for children safely and in line with the school's policies and procedures. This training includes such topics as first aid and safe administration of medication, child protection and safe restraint of children on the occasions when it might be necessary (Team Teach).

At the last inspection the Head of Care was enrolled on a National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) leading to the Registered Managers Award, the recognised qualification for such a position. The post holder advised the inspectors that he has successfully completed this training and that four care staff who were enrolled on the NVQ level three programme have recently received confirmation of successful completion of their course. With another member of care staff enrolled on the NVQ level 4 programme in child care, the school is moving close to the target of 80% of residential care staff holding NVQ level 3 or above or its equivalent. The Head of care also advised of the school's intention to, in future, seek to recruit those who already possess these qualifications or are committed to so doing.

The school has an annual training programme in line with its current development plan and Appendix 2 of the National Minimum Standards. Some of this training is on a joint basis with teaching and residential care staff. Training recently undertaken includes familiarisation with the policy intents of *Every Child Matters* and the ways in which the school seeks to ensure the desired outcomes in the areas specified in the policy. The inspectors were also advised of training in Infection Control, which was taking place during the period of the inspection.

Residential care staff members receive formal supervision each term (more regularly when new or in their probationary period), but have access to their team leaders and the Head of Care who provide ongoing coaching and guidance. The inspectors were presented with the schools written guidance to staff about their conduct whilst on school premises, including what is expected of those who are resident in relation to the privacy, safety and protection of the children. Additionally, staff have ready access to the portfolio of all the school's policies and procedures and the user-friendly staff guide: *routines and common practices in our residential houses*, which summarises in quick reference form some of the policies and procedures.

The staff rotas, which were seen, are worked out to ensure that the numbers of staff on each shift (2 or 3 residential care staff to 8 children) are sufficient to meet the needs of the children. It was also observed that in addition to the care staff on duty during and after school hours, the Head of Care is available and some teaching staff undertake extraneous duties. Time was seen to be set aside for staff to complete records, attend staff meetings and such other duties necessary to care for the children effectively such as liaising with their parents or carers.



# 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

<b>BEING HEALTHY</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>14</b>	3
<b>15</b>	X

<b>STAYING SAFE</b>	
<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>	X
<b>8</b>	3
<b>10</b>	X
<b>26</b>	3
<b>27</b>	3

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

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

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

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

Yes

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	In addition to the acceptable medication procedure for the safe storage and administration of the children's medication within school, those in control of the school should consider reviewing the system of transferring children's medicines between home and school. This is so that if there are any risks they can be identified and addressed.	
2.	RS17	Those in charge of the school should continue to develop the care/placement planning process for each child so that it shows, in written form, a clear relationship between the child's assessed care needs, the actions which are to be taken to meet them and the impact or outcome of those actions.	
3.	RS24	Those in control of the school should attend to the following:-  I.) All paved pathways around the school should be checked and where there are uneven paving slabs these should be remedied so that they do not present a trip hazard.  II.) Repair the worn sofas in the Owl unit.	

		<p>III.) Proceed, as planned with the schedule for internal re-decoration of the residential units and arrange for the external repainting the rear of these buildings.</p> <p>IV.) Arrange for sections of guttering around the Owl/Woodpecker building to be cleared of vegetation and other debris.</p> <p>V.) Keep under regular and documented risk assessment the safety of the redundant building on the school site.</p>	
4.	RS31	Continue to work towards achieving a ratio of 80% residential care staff holding the NVQ level 3 or its validated equivalent in the Care of Children and Young People.	

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

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