



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

Wells Park School

**School Lane
Lambourne Road
Chigwell
Essex
IG7 6NN**

Lead Inspector
David Downes

Announced Inspection
29th November 2005 10:30

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 or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life.

Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above.

SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of school	Wells Park School
Address	School Lane Lambourne Road Chigwell Essex IG7 6NN
Telephone number	0208 502 6442
Fax number	0208 502 6729
Email address	davidwood@wellspark.freemove.co.uk
Provider Web address	
Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school	Essex County Council
Name of Head	Mr David Wood
Name of Head of Care	Mrs Carol Mitchell
Age range of residential pupils	5 - 11
Date of last welfare inspection	3 March 2005

Brief Description of the School:

Wells Park School is owned and managed by Essex County Council. The school provides boarding accommodation for up to 40 boys or girls of primary school age, from Monday to Friday in term time.

At the time of this inspection, the school was accommodating 31 pupils, almost all of whom were boys, aged 7 –11. Pupils have statements of special educational needs, identifying social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The majority of the pupils are from Essex, but a small number are placed at the school by neighbouring local authorities.

The residential accommodation is located in the main school building. Children are accommodated in four groups on two floors. In addition to outdoor play areas, the school has a sports hall and an indoor swimming pool.

The overall aim of the school is to work towards reintegrating children into their home environment with appropriate schooling. The school works closely with pupils' parents and other carers.

In addition to being a school, Wells Park is also currently a centre for teacher training.

SUMMARY

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

This announced inspection took place between 29th November and 16th December 2005. Two inspectors visited the school on 29th November. This visit included: observation of the pupils' daily routine; interviews with the Director, the Head of Care; interviews with two residential care staff and a group of pupils who were members of the school council; informal discussions with groups of pupils and care staff; a pupil guided tour of the boarding areas; sampling of records held by the school, including pupils' personal files. In addition to this visit to the school, questionnaires received from parents and staff were analysed. Other professionals were consulted to seek their views about the school.

In the current inspection year, the Commission is conducting its inspection activities with increased proportionality. Existing information about the school and information from previous inspections has been taken into account in deciding the degree to which the National Minimum Standards (NMS) have been considered. For this inspection, the assessed NMS are those that are considered to be the most relevant to the service provided by the school, in the context of the background information described above. All of the NMS that have not been assessed at this inspection were assessed as 'met' at the last inspection.

Twenty-two standards were assessed at this inspection; twenty standards were met (or exceeded) and two were almost met, resulting in two recommendations for the school to address.

The inspectors consider that the school continues to provide a very good overall standard of care and accommodation for its pupils.

The school's last OfSTED inspection took place in October 2005. The inspection report rated the 'overall effectiveness' of the school and pupil's 'personal development and well-being' as "good", with 'care, guidance and support' and 'leadership and management' being assessed as "outstanding".

What the school does well:

Pupils felt well cared for and expressed very positive views about the school. During the inspection, pupils showed an impressive level of understanding and consideration towards each other.

The school continues to work very effectively with parents and this was reflected in the extremely positive views that parents expressed about their own, and their children's, experience of the school.

The Director and the senior management team provide effective and efficient management of the residential provision. The staff work very well as a team and demonstrate high levels of enthusiasm and commitment. The training and development opportunities available for care staff are particularly good and the school's commitment towards achieving the relevant National Vocational Qualifications for care staff is commendable.

Pupils receive a high level of individualised support and this is valued by parents and by the pupils themselves. Pupils benefit from the school's consistent approach to behaviour management. A wide range of enjoyable 'after-school' activities is provided for pupils. The school has continued to achieve a very good standard in its arrangements for pupils' health care and in the quality of meals provided.

Residential accommodation has been developed to a high overall standard, with a homely, well-equipped lounge and kitchen/dining area in each of the group living units.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The new format for care plans reflected a more systematic approach to recording the way in which pupils should be supported.

Staff supervision records were clearer and more detailed.

Information about how to make a complaint and about 'safe holding' have been added to the children's guide.

Further improvements have been made to the residential accommodation, including the upgrading of some pupils' bedrooms.

What they could do better:

The school should ensure that Criminal Records Bureau disclosure checks on new staff meet the requirements of the National Minimum Standards and current guidance.

Hot water temperatures, at outlets accessible to children, should be controlled more effectively.

The school should review its risk assessment for wedging open fire doors to take into account recent guidance provided by Essex Fire Authority.

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

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

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

CONTENTS

Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Recommended Actions identified during the inspection

Being Healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

14, 15

The health care needs of pupils were identified and promoted through detailed plans.

Pupils were provided with nutritious food in sufficient quantity.

EVIDENCE:

The school was in the process of implementing a new recording system for pupils' care plans (Individual Social Plans). Where new care plans had been completed, they identified the physical, emotional and mental health needs of pupils and the actions required to address them. Pupils' main carers retain primary responsibility for health needs. From parents' questionnaires and discussions with staff, it was evident that the school is proactive in identifying children who would benefit from further assessment of their health needs and in helping to arrange these assessments. The school takes appropriate action to seek medical help in the event of an accident at school. The school has obtained regular sessions at the Child and Family Consultation Centre (CFCS), and has good links with other professionals, such as the school nurse and the local pharmacist.

The school's systems for the storage and administration of medication remained robust.

A pleasant lunchtime was spent with pupils and staff during the inspection. The children were very polite and helpful. Staff ensured that pupils were served first and encouraged them to eat a well-balanced meal. Plenty of fresh vegetables and fruit were available at the meal. A good choice of main courses and deserts was available. The school has received awards for the healthy diet provided for pupils and for consistently high standards in food safety and hygiene. The inspectors were informed that the school was participating in the 'Healthy Schools' programme.

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):

4, 5, 6, 10, 26, 27

With the exception of certain aspects of health and safety and staff recruitment, practices in the school served to safeguard pupils.

Pupils responded very positively to the school's consistent and effective approach to behaviour management.

EVIDENCE:

The school's policy and staff guidance on complaints met the required standard. Written information about the complaints process was available for pupils. All of the parents who completed the questionnaire said that they knew how to access the school's complaints procedure, but had not needed to make

a complaint. The inspectors were informed that the school had not received any complaints since the last inspection.

The school's policies continue to meet the required standards in relation to how any child protection issues would be dealt with.

Pupils said that they had "lots of friends", felt "safe at school" and had "friends and adults that look after me". Bullying was not an issue identified by pupils or parents.

The school has a very structured day and evening routine, of which all of the children spoken to had a clear understanding. The school continues to use a token economy system to promote positive behaviour with pupils. At regular intervals, staff distributed tokens to pupils to reward good behaviour. Pupils were clear about this system of behaviour management, understood how many tokens were needed to 'earn' particular activities and why they sometimes did not earn a token. Staff were observed to apply this system consistently, for example, during lunch when they had consistent expectations in respect of pupils' behaviour. Staff praised good behaviour such as being helpful or co-operative. Care plans held 'behaviour logs' which included observations of positive as well as challenging behaviour of individual pupils. Pupils were set individualised behaviour targets, reviewed every five weeks.

One parent said the best thing about the school was "... the way they help to change the children's behaviour" and another that the methods used were "proportionate and effective". Throughout the day, the inspectors observed pupils behaving in a responsible and courteous way towards others.

In response to a recommendation made at the last inspection, the school had added information about physical restraint ('safe holding') to the children's guide. Inspectors discussed, with the director, the system in place for ensuring that the school's practice in the use of physical restraint was up to date and took in to account any good practice and safety developments, as the school does not benefit from external accreditation of its physical restraint methods. The Director described how he discharged his responsibility in this area by regularly checking DfES guidance and alerts.

Health and safety records were clear and accessible. There was evidence from these records that fire drills were held regularly and evacuation times were noted. One pupil told inspectors that they had a drill at 3 am and that "two houses did a practice without adults". The pupil was very pleased that they had "got out in one and a half minutes".

It was noted, during an evening tour of the boarding area, that all fire doors leading to stairways, and from the stairs to boarding areas were wedged open. The Head of Care said that it "would not be practical" to keep doors closed during evening activities. The school was concerned that pupils would have

difficulty opening the fire doors or that their fingers could become trapped, stating that this was considered to be "more of a risk than the risk of fire". The Head of Care and the Director thought that the fire service had visited during an evening, when the doors would have been wedged open, and that they had not raised this as a concern. The Commission subsequently sought clarification on this point and Essex Fire Authority has provided the school with further advice, on which the school should act.

Records of water temperatures at hot water outlets indicated that on one day the temperature at four outlets (including outlets to which children had access) was over 50 degrees Centigrade. The highest temperature recorded was 54.3 degrees. These high temperatures were recorded on subsequent checks, suggesting that the problem had not been satisfactorily addressed.

The recruitment records of three staff were inspected. Records were clear and included the required information. However, one aspect of the school's staff recruitment practice did not adequately protect pupils. Two members of staff had been employed before the outcomes of the Criminal Records Bureau checks initiated by the school were known. This issue has been raised at the last two inspections.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

12, 13, 22

The school's residential provision contributed very positively to the overall care and support of pupils.

EVIDENCE:

The residential care and teaching staff groups continue to work very effectively together to encourage each child's personal, social and educational development. Parents made extremely positive comments about the commitment that the staff demonstrated in seeking to meet the needs of each pupil.

Various activities were open to pupils, depending on the amount of tokens they had earned during the day. The school had made good links with external sports providers to extend the range of available opportunities. Pupils also had access to a wide range of toys and games at the 'token shop'. Pupils were well supervised during the evening activities. Pupils were very enthusiastic about the activities offered by the school.

Pupils knew who their key-worker was, but also indicated that they would be happy to approach other members of staff if they had a problem. One pupil introduced their key-worker to the inspectors describing them as the "person who looks after you". Care plans addressed pupil's emotional and social needs. Staff explained how they were trying to increase pupil's involvement in and ownership of these plans. There was evidence in the new format plans that pupil's had contributed to some sections, for example 'What helps me when I'm cross' and 'Things that are important to me'. Both of these sections held good information for staff about how to support pupils.

Communication amongst staff remains effective, helping to ensure that when pupils are experiencing particularly difficult times they are supported by all of the staff.

The school has secured regular sessions with the Child and Family Consultation Service (CFCS), and has good links with other professionals to support the particular needs of individual pupils.

Parents praised the staff for the high quality of individualised support provided for pupils. One parent commented that "...they [staff] have really taken an interest in my child and very sincerely care about him and his welfare." The inspectors were shown a letter that the school had received recently from a social worker, complimenting the school on the support provided for a pupil with complex needs. The social worker commended the teaching and care staff for "the effort, commitment, stability and nurture that they have shown [the pupil]" and for advocating on the pupil's behalf.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

2, 9, 17, 20

There are planned opportunities for consultation with children and parents involved with the school.

Relationships between staff and pupils were good.

EVIDENCE:

There is an active school council with representatives from each class. Pupils were able to tell inspectors about a number of suggestions that had been made at the council and implemented by the school. The school carries out an annual survey of pupils' views. Weekly 'house nights' and individual time spent with their key workers provide pupils with further opportunities to communicate their views. Parents said that they were consulted individually and during open days and had opportunities to contribute their views about the way the school was running.

The inspectors observed positive interaction between pupils and staff throughout the inspection. Parents described the staff as "friendly", "approachable" and "caring" and one parent said that "...the children feel they can trust them [staff]".

The school was in the process of implementing new care plans (Individual Social Plans) for pupils, linked to their Individual Learning Plans. As stated elsewhere, where these plans were available, there was evidence of pupil involvement and clear guidance for staff about completion. The completed plans that were inspected, covered emotional, social physical and educational needs of pupils. The school had plans to increase the input of parents and other carers in the development of pupil's plans, and to use part of the plan as a 'school life diary' that pupils could take with them when they leave. Not all assessments or reports were signed or dated. It was not always clear that the actions identified (e.g. following observation of a child's behaviour) had been followed through or monitored by staff.

A payphone was available on each landing for children to make and receive calls during the evening. One pupil explained to inspectors that "...you ask staff for money and they give you 40p" for the telephone. A parent described staff as "welcoming and happy to listen to any concerns", another parent said "...they [staff] are always checking with me to see if I am happy with the school" and a third said that they are kept informed by the weekly 'chat book' and telephone calls.

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, 24

The boarding facilities were generally furnished to a high standard, creating a warm, homely atmosphere.

EVIDENCE:

Residential accommodation is located within the main school building and is satisfactory for its purpose. A parent said that the accommodation was “well equipped, clean and well maintained”. Two parents commented that some windows were draughty. The inspectors noted that the windows were metal framed and that some were in need of attention.

The decoration and furnishing of residential areas was generally of a good standard. The lounge and kitchen areas of each unit were particularly homely, attractively furnished and well equipped. Since the last inspection, some bedrooms had been redecorated and newly furnished. One pupil said, “[another pupil] and me chose our curtains and bed sets” and other pupils said that they were looking forward to having their rooms upgraded.

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):

28, 29, 30, 31, 32

The school's residential provision is well managed. Staff demonstrated a good level of understanding in respect of pupils' needs and described a supportive working environment.

EVIDENCE:

The standard relating to written information about the school was not fully inspected, but it was noted that additional information recommended at the last inspection had been added to the children's guide.

The sampled supervision records demonstrated that care staff were supervised regularly and that these sessions were child-focussed, and also covered the support and training needs of staff. Clear action sheets were attached to each

set of records. Staff presented as feeling motivated and well supported by the management team. Good progress had been made towards meeting the expectations of the NMS in respect of the National Vocational Qualifications for care staff. The number and deployment of staff served the needs of children well.

The induction programme and ongoing training for care staff continued to be well organised. Evidence from this inspection, considered alongside that from the last inspection, indicates that the school continues to exceed this National Minimum Standard.

A clear management structure operated at the school and an effective senior management team was in place.

Parents who completed the questionnaire all considered that their children were being very well looked after by the school. Comments received from parents included the following:

"The quality of staff is first class. They are constantly cheerful, enthusiastic and helpful."

"Friendly, professional staff who make the children feel at home."

"The level of care of the children is excellent. Each child gets personal attention."

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools have been met and uses the following scale.

4 Standard Exceeded (Commendable) **3** Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
2 Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls) **1** Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

“X” in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion

“N/A” in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
Standard No	Score
14	4
15	4

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

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
Standard No	Score
12	4
13	3
22	4

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

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
Standard No	Score
16	X
21	N/A
23	3
24	4
25	X

MANAGEMENT	
Standard No	Score
1	X
18	X
19	X
28	3
29	4
30	3
31	3
32	3
33	X

Are there any outstanding recommendations from the last inspection? YES

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	RS26	<p>The school should promote the health and safety of pupils.</p> <p>This refers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reviewing arrangements to minimise the risk of scalding from hot water outlets; - acting on the advice provided by the Fire Authority on the risk assessment for the wedging open of fire doors. 	24/02/06
2	RS27	<p>The school, in conjunction with the LEA, should ensure that staff members do not start work in the school until a Criminal Records Bureau disclosure check has been satisfactorily completed at the appropriate level.</p> <p>This is a repeat recommendation</p>	24/02/06

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