



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

**RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL**

**Mulberry Bush School**

**Standlake  
Witney  
Oxfordshire  
OX29 7RW**

*Lead Inspector*  
**Clare Davies**

*Unannounced Inspection*  
**6-7th July 2006      11:00**

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>	
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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>	Mulberry Bush School
<b>Address</b>	Standlake Witney Oxfordshire OX29 7RW
<b>Telephone number</b>	01865 300202
<b>Fax number</b>	01865 300084
<b>Email address</b>	reception@mulberrybush.oxon.sch.uk
<b>Provider Web address</b>	www.mulberrybush.oxon.sch.uk
<b>Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school</b>	Mulberry Bush School Limited
<b>Name of Head</b>	Mr John Diamond
<b>Name of Head of Care</b>	Mr John Turberville
<b>Age range of residential pupils</b>	5-12 years
<b>Date of last welfare inspection</b>	11-11-2005

**Brief Description of the School:**

Mulberry Bush School is run by a charitable trust and is approved and registered by the DfES as a non-maintained special school. It provides 40 weeks of residential care and education for up to 36 boys and girls aged 5-12 years, who have experienced severe emotional damage in infancy and early childhood. The school specifically provides therapeutic treatment for children who have serious emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The school is situated in a village in rural West Oxfordshire, 5 miles south of Witney. Four houses provide the accommodation and are located around a 'village green', the classrooms are in close proximity and the layout of the site creates the spirit of a community.

The cost of this service per child is £116,245.

# SUMMARY

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

This summary has been written for the children of Mulberry Bush School.

The inspector telephoned the school one week before the inspection to tell them that they would be coming. Two inspectors spent time visiting the houses and joining in with lunch and tea over two days. The inspectors spent time talking with the adults that look after the children and heard about what work they do in the houses, in the classrooms, in the Shifford team and in the family team. The inspectors also:

- Met with the nurse and saw that the medicines are kept safely.
- Met with the school council who were very helpful in telling the inspector about the things they have done and how the school listens to their views.
- Talked to the adults in charge.
- Looked at records in files and on the computer.
- Watched how children and adults got on well together

The inspectors decided that the Mulberry Bush is an excellent school.

Thank you to the children, the school council and the adults for helping the inspectors during their visit.

## What the school does well:

- The adults work very well together to help the children.
- The inspectors agree with one child who said that; 'the adults are very good at sorting things out when they go wrong'.
- The nurse makes sure that the adults know how to give out medicines and keep them locked away safely.
- The adults make sure that any bullying is stopped and children are taught to think about other people's feelings.
- When there are problems the adults sort them out and then write about them so they can see where children need lots of help.
- When good things happen the adults write about them so children know they have achieved and can feel good about it when adults say 'well done'.
- There are meetings, circle time and the school council to ask children what they think about things.
- The houses are nice places to live with comfy furniture; the inspectors saw how much the children like the gardens and play area on the green.
- The adults do lots of training to help them understand what they need to know to help children.

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

A few suggestions were made at the last inspection on how to make things better at The Mulberry Bush School and the adults have seen to these changes.

- One example was to fix the broken floor tiles near Thames class.
- Another was to arrange for the kitchen staff to repeat some training that they need to do every 3 years.

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

- The school needs to test the fire bells every week to make sure they are working and this hasn't always happened.
- When the school chooses adults to look after you and work at the school they need to do lots of checks to make sure that person is okay and will keep children safe.

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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Staying Safe

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Achieving Economic Wellbeing

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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):

14,15

Quality in this outcome area is excellent. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to the service.

There are excellent arrangements for meeting the overall health and welfare of the children.

### EVIDENCE:

The school nurse is responsible for the management of the children's physical health and she ensures that when a child is admitted to the school, he/she is registered with the local GP practice. Children's existing individual health care needs are identified before admission to the school, and this is recorded in clear easily accessible integrated treatment plans detailing how their specific needs are to be addressed. The inspectors saw several individual health records detailing how the child's overall physical and emotional health needs would be met. Records also identified visits to the dentist and optician and there were clear plans to address any health care needs when children leave the site.

The nurse carries out regular health reviews and ensures that all the children have access to her if they wish to talk through any worries or concerns. She visits the houses on a regular basis and talks to both staff and children.

As recommended at the last inspection, the inspector had sight of the new parental consent forms, which have been introduced to include permission for optical and dental checks to be carried out.

The school has a psychotherapy department, and an individual psychotherapy assessment is undertaken soon after a child is admitted to the school and a programme of support implemented.

There are excellent systems in place for the safe storage and administration of medication and this is all monitored and recorded by the nurse. Clear records

are held for the transfer of any medication from the pharmacy into the school; from the nurse's office to the residential houses; and to and from the children's home. The inspector was talked through the procedure of medication practices in the residential units by a care and treatment leader, and found the practice to be in good order.

The nurse has implemented training for all staff administering medication and there is a clear competency record, which is signed by a supervisor and the nurse.

There are clear records of any accidents, injury or significant illness with the necessary follow up actions required and this was well evidenced in the children's records.

Health issues that relate to ethnicity; race; religion; belief are fully assessed in respect of each child and these issues are explicitly addressed in the integrated treatment plans with actions as to how these are to be met. A cultural resource group meets regularly to support this area of practice.

The inspectors joined the children and adults at mealtimes in their houses and staff have a good understanding of what makes a good balanced diet. The children all enjoyed their meals and on the whole accepted the standards of behaviour that was set. Some children declined the set meal and appeared to eat very little, but in discussion with staff and the nurse, any child not eating would be discussed at the daily monitoring meeting of the staff team.

A "Healthy Schools Group" has been established to monitor a healthy approach throughout the school in relation to having a healthy diet and this will be ongoing.

# Staying Safe

## The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled.(NMS 3)
- Children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration.(NMS 4)
- The welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse.(NMS 5)
- Children are protected from bullying by others.(NMS 6)
- All significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified by the Head of the school or designated person to the appropriate authorities.(NMS 7)
- Children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return.(NMS 8)
- Children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour.(NMS 10)
- Children live in schools that provide physical safety and security.(NMS 26)
- There is careful selection and vetting of all staff, volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers.(NMS 27)

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

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

The quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. 'Staying Safe' is a key priority for the staff and children at The Mulberry Bush. Children have a safe place in which to live and play where staff are skilled and trained in responding to any child protection issue, complaint or bullying behaviour. The school had overlooked some attention to fire safety, but this had been addressed prior to this inspection and should be completed during the summer holidays in preparation for the new term in September.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Staff were observed to respect the children's privacy where appropriate and confidentiality was afforded to information held. Electronic and paper records are stored securely.

The school has a simple complaints procedure for the children and records seen confirmed that this is used appropriately and therefore accessible. The procedure concludes by establishing if the child is happy with what has happened to sort out their complaint and an opportunity to say what else they would like done if they are not satisfied with the outcome. There is a good monitoring system of these records undertaken by a senior manager.

Awareness and commitment to child protection issues continues to be of an extremely high standard. There is a strong working relationship with the local authority Children and Families Assessment Team that includes acknowledging their statutory role and accessing consultation and training.

Close management and supervision of the children are in place, thereby reducing bullying behaviour. Incidents of bullying are addressed individually, through group work and through the school council. Posters are on display in each house referring to friendships and bullying.

The Mulberry Bush School works towards supporting a child to feel safe in their physical and emotional environment to enable them to risk change, try new ways of being and relating to others. The staff work closely together to provide this support to the children and to identify when there is a need for physical containment to provide a safe and secure place.

There are appropriate strategies in place to manage challenging behaviour and all staff receive training in both de-escalation and safe restraint techniques (PROACT SCIP-r UK). The school has two members of staff trained as instructors who are able to offer advice and support to staff. The use of sanctions and physical interventions is appropriate and records are made, including the views of the children where possible, and this has been discussed with the children on the school council. The school has an excellent monitoring system for recording behavioural events, and graphs are produced to demonstrate concerns and highlight progress.

Thorough risk assessments relating to each individual child have been produced and these are contained within the integrated treatment plans. These risk assessments are referred to when planning any activity or outing. Daily meetings highlight children who may be at particular high risk of certain behaviours; absconding, bullying, being bullied etc. A sample of risk assessments was inspected, one seen was in relation to a camping trip and found to be clear, well written and regularly updated.

The maintenance team give high priority to any repairs or hazards around the school for the safety of the staff and children. The inspectors did not observe any hazards and staff confirmed that their requests to the maintenance team are dealt with promptly.

The fire service reported to CSCI that during their visit to the school prior to this inspection it was identified that previous recommendations remained outstanding. The school confirmed that they had received quotes for the work to be undertaken and would ensure that this is completed during the summer holidays whilst the children are off site.

Records evidencing that the fire call points have been regularly tested were poor with no record of testing from November 2005 until June 2006. The school had recognised this failing prior to this inspection as testing had occurred weekly throughout June, however the records were inadequate and need to indicate which call points have been tested and that testing has occurred of emergency lighting. The school arranges for a contractor to visit to test the fire safety systems every 4 months; it is the weekly testing that needs to occur and recorded as such. Designated staff have been trained as fire marshals, and the children confirmed that they knew how to respond if the fire alarm should be heard.

Recruitment records for 6 staff employed since the last inspection were examined. Generally these were good records with clear evidence that the school does not permit anyone to work until they have received clearance through the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). All records held at least two references, though for some only one referee had been contacted by the school to verify the reference. It is recommended that direct contact is made with each referee. Some staff involved in recruitment confirmed that they explore any career gaps noted on application forms however this was not evidenced. It is recommended that records are made of any discussions with applicants to identify gaps in their employment history.

# Enjoying and Achieving

## The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

12,22

The quality in this outcome area is excellent. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Education is valued and integrated into the residential care programme. Children receive support that encourages and enables them to be children enjoying experiences they may have been denied in their early years.

## EVIDENCE:

Each child has an integrated treatment plan that is a live document available on the school IT system and this also promotes close working with residential staff, the education team, the Shifford support team, the family team and the therapists.

Residential staff have access to this plan and associated documents such as Statements of Special Educational Need and Individual Education Plans. It was evident that the staff had a good awareness of the children's educational plans and work closely with teaching staff.

The Shifford Team provide valuable support to children who find it difficult to manage their behaviour in the classroom or houses. The Shifford team have a designated area in the school and provide space for time out as decided by teaching or house staff, or self selected by children who recognise they need space to be supported and reflect on their behaviour. A staff member's dog is a respected member of the Shifford team and for some children, the dog contributes towards the therapeutic environment provided.

Older children in the final stage of their education are prepared for the possibility of returning to a mainstream school after leaving the Mulberry Bush. There are links with a local primary school where the Mulberry Bush children

have a pen pal. Visits to the school take place and the Mulberry Bush children wear the local school uniform and are supported by Mulberry Bush staff whilst attending the mainstream setting.

The individual support for children is excellent with very good contribution from adults within all the staff teams. The staff are committed to promote the overall progress, enjoyment and education of the children.

# 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):

2,11,17,20

The quality in this outcome area is excellent. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Students are involved in consultation and are encouraged and supported in making decisions. Care plans are very clear, identifying targets that children and staff can work towards.

## EVIDENCE:

Listening to children and consulting them is fully integrated into the care practices at the school and carried out in a variety of ways. Individually, children have opportunities to speak with staff and collectively each house has daily circle time to allow children to reflect on their day and express their feelings about any issues. The inspectors sat in on some circle time and was impressed with the way the adults sensitively but firmly handled the children's responses and equally impressed how the children themselves handled this group session.

The school council provides a forum for children to have their say on how the school is run, and an inspector met with the council to hear of their work. The children provided examples of how their views had been listened to and how they ensure that representatives gather the views from all the children. The inspector was informed that the council had assisted with the recruitment of a

new cook by tasting sample dishes from the prospective candidates and forming a judgement on the quality of the food.

There is very evident warmth in the relationship between the staff and children, and the children themselves confirmed this. Staff appeared very comfortable with their role of setting clearly understood boundaries for the children while maintaining a good relationship between themselves and the children.

As the end of the academic year was approaching, the school were able to provide examples of how a new child would be welcomed to the school and how older children are prepared for leaving the Mulberry Bush. Some older children shared with the inspector their leaving plan that they had produced with an adult; this included collecting photographs, revisiting people and places from when they first arrived at the school and planning activities of their choice.

Each child has a clear, easily understood integrated treatment plan that reflects their overall needs. This plan details how these needs are to be addressed and the specific roles and responsibilities of key others and are based upon a thorough assessment and detailed risk assessments. The school has a well-established and thorough system for reviewing these plans and the children are actively encouraged to participate in their reviews.

Children are given every encouragement to keep in contact with their family and staff readily give practical support to make this contact possible. The inspectors observed this on the evening of the inspection.

The school contacts parents, as appropriate regarding any welfare concerns and children are able to meet their parents at school in private and comfortable surroundings.

# 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):

24

The quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The school provides good quality, homely and well-maintained accommodation.

### EVIDENCE:

The school is located in a village close to Witney and stands in reasonably sized grounds with a central green for the children to play as well as separate gardens for each house. Each garden has a variety of well-maintained play equipment for the children to enjoy. The school site is maintained to a high standard and provides the children with a safe space and freedom to play and have fun.

The four residential houses provide homely comfortable accommodation. All the houses are individual in style and in good decorative order. Houses are colourful, child friendly with good furnishings, pictures and plants. Most bedrooms are single with some children sharing a double room. The inspector was invited into some of the children's bedrooms and observed the ways the children had personalised their rooms.

All houses are well maintained with any problems being resolved on a daily basis by the attendance of the maintenance foreman at the daily monitoring staff meeting.

# Management

## The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils.(NMS 1)
- Children's needs, development and progress is recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions.(NMS 18)
- There are adequate records of both the staff and child groups of the school.(NMS 19)
- Children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently.(NMS 28)
- Children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs.(NMS 29)
- Children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare.(NMS 30)
- Children receive the care and services they need from competent staff.(NMS 31)
- Children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools.(NMS 32)
- The governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school.(NMS 33)

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

1,28,31,32

The quality in this outcome area is excellent. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. A sound management structure is in place pulling together all the teams to follow an integrated approach to the school's therapeutic way of working.

## EVIDENCE:

The quality in the area of management continues to be excellent as reported from last year's inspection. Mulberry Bush school is well managed with good leadership. Staff have clear delegated roles and work towards an integrated approach for the benefit of the children. There are good records and documents throughout.

There is a high commitment from staff who in turn feel supported with good opportunities through training, professional development, supervision and consultation.

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

<b>STAYING SAFE</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>3</b>	3
<b>4</b>	4
<b>5</b>	4
<b>6</b>	3
<b>7</b>	X
<b>8</b>	3
<b>10</b>	4
<b>26</b>	2
<b>27</b>	3

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

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

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

<b>MANAGEMENT</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>1</b>	4
<b>18</b>	X
<b>19</b>	X
<b>28</b>	3
<b>29</b>	X
<b>30</b>	X
<b>31</b>	3
<b>32</b>	4
<b>33</b>	X

NO

Are there any outstanding recommendations from the last inspection?

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

This section sets out the actions that must be taken so that the proprietor meets the Children Act 1989, Inspection of Schools and Colleges Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards.

No.	Standard	Recommendation	Timescale for action (Serious welfare concerns only)
1.	RS26	Fire systems should be tested routinely and recorded accurately.  It is recommended that the director confirm in writing to CSCI when the school has met the recommendations of the fire officer's report.	
2.	RS27	The recruitment process should include verification of each reference and evidence that career gaps have been explored.	

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