

inspection report

Residential Special School (not registered as
a Children's Home)

Meadows School

Meadows Memorial School Bungalow

London Road

Southborough

Tunbridge Wells

Kent

TN4 0RJ

26th & 27th November 2002

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Launched in April 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) is the single inspectorate for social care in England.

The Commission combines the work formerly done by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

The role of CSCI is to:

- Promote improvement in social care
- Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market
- Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services
- Hold performance statistics on social care
- Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services
- Register and inspect services against national standards
- Host the Children's Rights Director role.

Inspection Methods & Findings

SECTION B of this report summarises key findings and evidence from this inspection. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

'9' in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not applicable.

'X' is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

SCHOOL INFORMATION**Name of School**

Meadows School

Tel No: 01892-529144**Address**London Road, Southborough, Tunbridge Wells,
Kent, TN4 0RJ**Fax No:01892-527787****Email Address:****Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school**

Barnardo's

Name of Head

Mr M. Price

NCSC Classification

Residential Special School

Type of school EBD**Date of last boarding welfare inspection:** 11.12.01

Date and Time of Inspection Visit	26.11.02 09:30hrs	ID Code
Name of NCSC Inspector(s)	Sue Urwin, Sophie Wood and Sarah Montgomery	
Name of Boarding Sector Specialist Inspector (if applicable):		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)		
Name of any Signer or Interpreter		

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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Residential Special Schools are subject to inspection by the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) to determine whether the welfare of children (ie those aged under 18) is adequately safeguarded and promoted while they are accommodated by the school.

Inspections assess the extent to which the school is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools, published by the Secretary of State under Section 87C of the Children Act 1989, and other relevant requirements of the Children Act 1989 as amended. Residential Special Schools are not registered as children's homes unless they accommodate, or arrange accommodation for, one or more children for more than 295 days a year.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the NCSC in respect of Meadows School

The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Recommended action by the school
- Advisory recommendations on boarding welfare
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the lay assessor (where relevant)
- The Head's response and proposed action plan to address findings

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections are undertaken in line with the agreed regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Children Act 1989 as amended, with additional visits as required.

The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL AND RESIDENTIAL PROVISION

Meadows School is a non-maintained residential and day special school providing accommodation and education for 38 boarders and 14 day pupils. The provision caters for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. At the time of the inspection, there were 28 boarders and 13 day pupils attending the school. The school is owned and funded by the charity Barnardo's, UK's largest voluntary childcare organisation.

The history of the school dates back to 1938 when the former Barnardo's boy, Captain Thomas Gerard Meadows left his life savings to the charity. Barnardo's opened Meadows memorial Home, which subsequently developed as a residential special school in the 1950's.

There are four separate and self-contained residential units; two of these are located off site in nearby Tunbridge Wells. The school has been purpose built over the past 10 years and designed to provide special education facilities. Occupancy of units has been lowered to enable improved personal space in the residential units. There are plans for a rebuild of one unit, to enable all students single occupancy of bedrooms. Units are homely and comfortably decorated.

The aims and objectives of the school are 'to provide a safe and caring environment in which each person's educational and social needs can be addressed'.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL IN BOARDING WELFARE

- A large staff team allows for individual needs to be met through keyworking sessions and activities.
- Keyworkers act as positive role models and relationships are based on mutual respect and consistent, fair boundaries.
- It is commendable that all staff who are not social work trained are qualified to NVQ Level 3 standard, this is well ahead of the target date of 2005.
- There is consistency between teaching and care staff and evidence of both working together in harmony with the aim of developing pupils' educational and social potential.
- Moral amongst care staff appears to be at an all time high.
- Staff are committed to the Statement of Purpose and ethos of the school.
- Child Protection policies are robust and stand as a good example for other schools to follow.
- The reward scheme appears to be working very well and encouraging pupils to achieve targets rather than focusing on negative behaviour.

WHAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD DO BETTER IN BOARDING WELFARE

- Further improvements to Deacon House are needed to enable more single bedrooms for pupils. It is acknowledged that this is being addressed with plans for a purpose built unit but it needs to be pursued and completed promptly.
- The school needs to ensure that hot water is monitored and maintained at the recommended temperature that is in line with health and safety guidelines and detailed in the standards.

CONCLUSIONS AND OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS ON BOARDING WELFARE

This was the first inspection of Meadows undertaken by the National Care Standards Commission. The inspection intended to focus on how the school is working towards meeting the National Minimum Standards and it is evident that Heads of School and Care have put in a great deal of effort into attaining National Minimum Standards for boarders within the school. During the course of the two days, that included Inspectors being present at both evening and early morning activities, Inspectors were also provided with evidence to support the school in achieving commendable practice, for example child protection, staff training and how the school responds to behaviour. These are all-important key areas for boarding welfare and deserve to be celebrated.

The school has undergone a number of changes in the past few years and this has involved changes in the Principal Head of Education to successfully bring the school out of 'special measures'. The school has now appointed a permanent Head who is committed to boarding welfare and appears to work very well with the Head of Care. It is reassuring that the staff group is more stable, fully staffed and rewarded with high moral. Staff, placing officers and pupil questionnaires had a good return rate but views and opinions were also backed up and clarified in discussions with pupils and staff. These comments are incorporated within the report.

The report findings show that the school has few recommended actions and the Inspectors look forward to working with the school on these areas, ensuring that all standards are met by December 2003.

The Inspectors would like to thank the staff and students for the very warm welcome they received on the visit.

NOTIFICATIONS TO LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY OR SECRETARY OF STATE

Is Notification of any failure to safeguard and promote welfare to be made by the National Care Standards Commission to the Local Education Authority or Department for Education and Skills under section 87(4) of the Children Act 1989 arising from this inspection?

NO

Notification to be made to:

**Local Education Authority
Secretary of State**

NO

NO

The grounds for any Notification to be made are:

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FROM LAST INSPECTION

Were the Recommended Actions from the last Inspection fully implemented?

YES

If No, the findings of this inspection on any Recommended Actions not implemented are listed below:

No	Standard	Recommended actions	

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS IDENTIFIED FROM THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The Head is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how recommended action and any advisory recommendations are to be addressed. This action plan is shown in Part D of this report.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Identified below are the actions recommended on issues addressed in the main body of the report in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders adequately in accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools. The references below are to the relevant Standards. Non-implementation of recommended action can lead to future statutory notification of failure to safeguard and promote welfare.

No	Standard*	Recommended Action	Time scale for action
1	RS2	Staff policies to be developed on consulting with and involving children, their families and significant others.	01/12/03
2	RS2	Policies, which are implemented in practice, guidance and training on consulting with and involving children, their families and significant others are available to staff and supported by the school's management team.	01/12/03
14		The school to secure and follow qualified medical, pharmaceutical or nursing advice in a written protocol on the provision of non-prescription 'household ' medicines to children.	01/12/03
26	RS26	Hot water temperature at taps accessible to vulnerable children does not exceed 43 degrees C – thermostat controls to be fitted and regular checks completed to ensure their effectiveness.	01/02/03
27	RS27	Confirmation of verification of ID to be recorded in the staff files.	01/12/03

ADVISORY RECOMMENDATIONS

Identified below are advisory recommendations on welfare matters addressed in the main body of the report and based on the National Minimum Standards, made for consideration by the school.

No	Refer to Standard*	Recommendation

Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix. E.g. RS10 refers to standard 10.

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS AND FINDINGS**

The following inspection methods were used in the production of this report

Direct Observation	YES
Pupil Guided Tour of Accommodation	YES
Pupil Guided Tour of Recreational Areas	YES

Checks with other Organisations

• Social Services	NO
• Fire Service	NO
• Environmental Health	NO
• DfES	NO
• School Doctor	NO
• Independent Person	NO
• Chair of Governors	NO
'Tracking' individual welfare arrangements	YES
Survey / individual discussions with boarders	YES
Group discussions with boarders	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group interviews with House staff teams	YES
Staff Survey	YES
Meals taken with pupils	YES
Early morning and late evening visits	YES
Visit to Sanatorium / Sick Bay	NO
Parent Survey	YES
Placing authority survey	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Individual interview with pupil(s)	YES
Answerphone line for pupil/staff comments	NO

Date of Inspection	26/11/02
Time of Inspection	09:30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs.)	17
Number of Inspector Days spent on site	2

Pre-inspection information and the Head's Self evaluation Form, provided by the school, have also been taken into account in preparing this report

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Age Range of Boarding Pupils **From**

11

To

16

NUMBER OF BOARDERS AT TIME OF INSPECTION:

BOYS

24

GIRLS

5

TOTAL

29

Number of separate Boarding Houses

4

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the NCSC assessment of the extent to which standards have been met. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

Zero "0" in the "Standard met" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

STATEMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S PURPOSE

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- Children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils.

Standard 1 (1.1 – 1.9)

The school has a written Statement of Purpose, which accurately describes what the school sets out to do for those children it accommodates, and the manner in which care is provided. The Statement can be made up of other documents, e.g., Letter of Approved Arrangements and school prospectus, which are required to include specific information.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The statement of purpose was last revised in October 2002 and meets with all the criteria in the new standards. The document is in a form that can be understood by parents and a handbook version has been designed for day and residential students. Parents receive a copy of the statement with the school prospectus prior to the young person's placement. The statement of purpose is reviewed annually and sent to governors for ratification. Staff are made aware of the statement of purpose by circulating it to new staff prior to them joining the school and discussion at Team Meetings. The document is also included in the school policy handbooks.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way that the school is run. No child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views.
- Children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled.
- Children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration.

Standard 2 (2.1 – 2.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Students informed the Inspectors of their involvement and participation in the Pupil's' Council. House meetings are held weekly and the Inspectors were invited to attend. The meetings gave evidence of young people being given an opportunity to express their views and opinions on day to day running of the school. Activities were discussed and agreed by the group. Young people are given the opportunity to meet regularly with their keyworker to discuss their placement plan and impending reviews. The Head of Care informed the Inspectors that the Children's Rights Officer was to give a talk to staff in December on Children's Rights.

The school provides 'pupil questionnaires' for young people prior to their annual review. An Inspector observed a school review and this provided evidence of the young person being involved and consulted on decisions about their lives. All young people are encouraged to attend their review. The school has developed a number of tools to assist the consultation process with young people and their parents. While Inspectors agreed that the consultation with young people and their parents is thorough and working in practice, in order to meet with the minimum standards, a policy needs to be compiled that outlines how this is implemented and training for staff on consulting with children and their families. It is important for the reader to note that the finding of 'almost met' does not necessary reflect the level of commendable practice that the school has developed and implemented in this area.

Standard 3 (3.1 – 3.11)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Procedural guidelines meet with minimum standards. Children's records are kept safely and securely. Information is shared on a 'need to know' basis and in line with the Caldecott principles (National Health Service). Telephone calls can be made and received in private and without staff permission. Any restriction on contact imposed by a local authority, is clearly stated in the placement plan. Staff demonstrated that they are sensitive to gender issues. One residential unit cannot provide single bedrooms; this is being addressed with an application for planning permission being made for a rebuild for single occupancy in Deacon House. The school provides guidance for staff and children on when it may be necessary to search a child's possessions. Each unit can provide accommodation that allows pupils to receive visitors in private. Staff are available to provide supervised access, when necessary.

Standard 4 (4.1 - 4.8)

Children know how and feel able to complain if they are unhappy with any aspect of living in the school, and feel confident that any complaint is addressed seriously and without delay.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Barnardo's corporate complaints procedure and complaints cards forms the basis of written policy and procedural guidelines on responding to complaints. Staff are to obtain training in responding to complaints via the intranet. Complaints are logged in the Units, these were recorded in line with guidance, albeit very few. The school has also made staff and children aware of the placing authority complaints procedure. Both procedures are explained to young people when they first join the school. The National Care Standards Commission details are made known to staff, parents and children within the relevant handbooks that explain the role of the NCSC in being an avenue for making complaints. Results from pupil questionnaires informed the Inspectors that all but one of the young people returning the forms knew how to make a complaint. Discussions with young people in the units, also gave evidence of young people being very aware of the complaint procedure.

Number of complaints about care at the school recorded over last 12 months:

0

Number of above complaints substantiated:

0

Number of complaints received by NCSC about the school over last 12 months:

0

Number of above complaints substantiated:

0

CHILD PROTECTION

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse.
- Children are protected from bullying by others.
- All significant events relating to the protection of children accommodated in the school are notified by the Head of the school to the appropriate authorities.
- Children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded positively to on return.

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.12)

There are systems in place in the school which aim to prevent abuse of children and suspicions or allegations of abuse are properly responded to. These are known and understood by all staff (including junior, ancillary, volunteer and agency staff).

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The school continues to implement robust child protection policies and procedures that are agreed by the local child protection team in Tunbridge Wells. Links have also been made with Kent Education Dept. The policy and guidelines are drawn from the Barnardo's publication, "Safeguarding and Protecting Children" and includes guidance if an allegation is made against senior management. The Head of Care has copies of both Kent Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) and out of county ACPC policies and procedures. Referrals and consultations are well documented by the Head of Care. The Head ensures that there is training for all staff, including ancillary staff, in matters of child protection. The Head of Care has identified that staff need to be more enabled to deal with disclosure and this has been included in the training programme and child protection day for this year,

The school has promptly informed NCSC of any young person referred to social services under child protection procedures. Procedures, policies and practice are commendable in this area. Child protection is a theme that is integrated within the day to day running of the school and the residential units. The Head of Care is the responsible person for child protection and acts as a children's champion in this area.

Number of recorded child protection enquiries initiated by the social services department during the past 12 months:

4

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.5)

The school has, and follows, an anti –bullying policy, with which children and staff are familiar and which is effective in practice. Where possible children in the school contribute to the development of the policy.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The school has robust anti-bullying policies and procedures that define bullying outline measures to prevent bullying and how to respond to observed or reported bullying. The policy is made known to staff and pupils and this was evidenced during discussions with the Inspectors. Incidents are dealt with using a Level Meetings Process, guidance states that, ‘ incidents should be dealt with as close to the problem as possible’. Therefore pupils are involved in ‘Level Meetings’ together with the member of staff concerned. Pupils who are bullied are well supported and those who bully are also given suitable guidance. The new Head has implemented an incident database that detects frequency of bullying for each individual pupil. Risk Assessments are carried out on times and places in which the risk of bullying is greatest. Training for staff on bullying is part of the ongoing Barnardo’s training programme. 17 out of 28 pupil questionnaires were returned and the percentage result below reflects the result from the said questionnaires and not the whole school. While the percentage of pupils appears relatively high, most of the pupils reporting being bullied in the past were satisfied that the school had responded promptly to their complaint and the issue was resolved. Two particular incidents disclosed in the questionnaires of young people currently concerned about bullying were fed back to the Head of Care promptly after analysis.

Percentage of pupils reporting never or hardly ever being bullied

52.63 %

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

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.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The school has a well-organised system in place to notify the National Care Standards Commission, Placing and Local Authorities and Department of Education and Skills of significant events. Staff are made aware of this and a copy of a matrix is displayed in each residential unit.

NUMBER OF THE FOLLOWING NOTIFIED TO NCSC DURING THE LAST 12 MONTHS:

- conduct by member of staff indicating unsuitability to work with children
- serious harm to a child
- serious illness or accident of a child
- serious incident requiring police to be called

0

0

0

1

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.9)

The school takes steps to ensure that children who are absent from the school without consent are protected in line with written policy and guidance.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

The school has robust procedures for responding to children who are absent without authority. The school liaises with placing authority, placing officer and parents to discuss strategies for the child's return. The Head of Care informed the Inspectors that there are no recorded incidents of children away from the school in the past 12 months.

Number of recorded incidents of a child running away from the school over the past 12 months:

0

CARE AND CONTROL

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect.
- Children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff response to inappropriate behaviour.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

Relationships between staff and children are based on mutual respect and understanding and clear professional and personal boundaries which are effective for both the individuals and the group.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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During discussions with young people, they were able to inform the Inspectors that they were enjoying positive relationships with staff. Observations during accommodation tours and evening activities gave evidence that relationships between staff and pupils were based on mutual respect. Staff provide pupils with clear and consistent understandable boundaries. All staff in direct care of children receive training in positive care and control of children within 3 months of joining the school. Communication between staff and children in the school is generally positive, and disagreements are dealt with reasonably.

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.26)

Staff respond positively to acceptable behaviour, and where the behaviour of children is regarded as unacceptable by staff, it is responded to by constructive disciplinary measures which are approved by the Head of Care.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****4**

The policy and procedures on care and control provide guidance on the development of "Care and Education" systems. This aims to provide pupils with a consistent environment both in the Education and Residential settings. Meadows aims to provide pupils with "a caring environment as opposed to overtly controlling and restrictive living situation" (*Methods of Care and Control: Policy and Procedure – October 2002*). Residential and teaching staff work together in creating an 'acceptable' atmosphere. All staff are given induction training including training in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) within three months of joining the school. Staff are taught to focus on de-escalating situations and restraint is used as a last resort. Permitted methods of restraint are those taught on the TCI course. Guidance details permitted and unacceptable forms of sanctions and discipline. Records of restraint and sanctions are recorded in a log and school database. The Head reviews and monitors the records monthly. Considering there were 166 recorded incidents in the school in the past 12 months, the number of recorded restraints continues to decline; a reflection of a more selective referral system and effective training for staff. In the past 12 months there have been 9 recorded incidents of restraint; 3 of these took place within the residential units. Children are given an opportunity to discuss their experience following restraint in a 'Life Space' interview. Children informed the Inspectors that they were very well informed about the behaviour policy and Code of Conduct for the school. Amongst the returned questionnaires, 70.58% stated that staff had informed them of the rules and what they were allowed to do. The school deserves the highest finding for their continued improvement and commitment to managing behaviour both in school and in the residential units.

QUALITY OF CARE

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes.
- The school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school.
- Children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities both within school and in the local community.
- Children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted.
- Children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs.
- Children 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.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.6)

Admission and leaving processes are planned and agreed with the child – and as appropriate, with parents and carers and placing authorities – as far as possible and handled with sensitivity and care by those concerned.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The School works to a comprehensive policy which sets out a clear criteria for admission. At the point of a referral being received, specific documents are requested, including; Education Statement, family history, medical conditions, known behaviours, etc. Such information is considered by the Referral Panel members who will then decide if the referral should progress to the next stage. The child would then be issued with information about the School, and offered a visit. If this proves successful, a trial period of 6 weeks is offered. During this, education and boarding staff liaise regularly in terms of recording and monitoring behaviours / progress, etc. A Panel meeting will then decide if the child is to be offered a permanent place.

Files were examined and evidence demonstrated that, in some cases, where permanent placements were not offered, this was well handled, demonstrating careful consideration being given to the best interests of the individual and the other children.

This information was gathered from reading the policy, examining files and interviewing a Panel member.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Members of staff from both 'teaching' and 'care' confirmed that communication between them has greatly improved over recent months. Both parties keep each other informed of significant events in order that each child's management / support remains consistent, whether they are in School or at home. Within the residential units it was evidenced that the children are given the space and support required to complete homework. This view was endorsed by the pupils at their group interview. Both sets of staff attend Review meetings and there is constant liaison between Keyworkers and Learning support assistants in order that everyone is clear about a child's progress in terms of his / her academic, social and independent living needs. To this end, it is evident that each child is supported 'holistically' by all staff.

It is extremely helpful to this process that residential staff assist with the school day by supervising the lunchtime period. As a result, the children can see that care and teaching staff maintain daily contact with each other.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.9)

Children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities both within the school and in the local community.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

During the inspection the inspectors met with the boarders and boarding staff. It was evident through discussion that, in general, activities tend to be unplanned and 'spur of the moment'. Activities were jointly planned between the children and staff. In house activities include games, television, play station, pool. Activities requiring a financial output are limited to one per week per child. The records seen reflected trips out at weekends, mainly to the cinema or swimming pool. Trips during the summer months included seaside and countryside visits. Risk assessments for activities were seen and found to be adequate. Some children attend youth clubs locally. Newspapers are delivered daily, and individual magazines for the children are delivered monthly. The children have access to a computer, but internet access is limited to school.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.25)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

Four separate files were examined and found to contain detailed evidence of any relevant health and welfare needs pertaining to each individual child. The School works to a comprehensive 'Promoting Health' policy, which includes the requirements of standard 14.4 and there was evidence of a detailed PHSE programme in place in School. The Boarding pupils are registered with local health care services and records showed evidence of appointments being attended and 'written up'. First Aid boxes were adequately stocked and certificates were seen, evidencing that staff have received relevant training. Records were well maintained, showing clear details of significant illnesses, accidents and injuries.

It became evident, during a tour of premises that a child was unwell and the arrangements for his care were seen to be well planned and managed.

Further evidence was seen to demonstrate that all of the living units are in the process of transferring to the Boots monitored dosage system which will provide clearer documentation than that currently being used.

Whilst a comprehensive medication policy exists, and it became evident that it is being followed in terms of storage and administration, there is currently no policy or guideline regarding the use of 'homely remedies'. The Head of Care was advised that the practise observed was very good, however a policy and subsequent guidance for care staff is required (14.18).

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.15)

Children are provided with adequate quantities of suitably prepared wholesome and nutritious food, having regard to their needs and wishes, and have the opportunity to learn to prepare their own meals. Where appropriate special dietary needs due to health, religious persuasion, racial origin or cultural background are met, including the choice of a vegetarian meal for children who wish it.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

Practise was observed in the living units at breakfast and teatime, and in School, at lunchtime. The Head Cook was interviewed and provided evidence of well-balanced menus that included a range of choices. She stated that, when necessary, she is advised of any special dietary requirements in order that she can make such provision. It was observed during lunch that 2 pupils did not want anything from the menu so they were offered an alternative.

All of the living units were found to have clean and well-stocked cupboards and fridges and menus were made available for inspection. Pupils were observed to come home from School and be able to make themselves a sandwich, etc before tea. A number of them stated that there are no hard and fast rules regarding eating, and that there is plenty of fresh fruit, yoghurts etc available if anyone is hungry between meals. 23% of children returning questionnaires stated that the food was 'very good', 17% said it was usually good, 35% said it was 'just about OK', 5.88% said it was 'usually bad', and 17% stated it was 'very bad'. While the children generally did not elaborate on comments about food, one commented that 'unit food is good, school food is bad'.

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

Bedrooms were seen to be decorated according to the individual's own choice and taste, completed with own possessions from home. All of the pupils questioned confirmed that they are able to wear their own clothing and this was seen during the Inspection. Records were made available, detailing how pocket money is distributed and recorded. Evidence showed that the child is required to sign for money received and of the four sets of records inspected, it was possible to conduct an audit trail on each. The Inspector was advised that an annual audit of all financial systems is conducted by the Bursar and the Finance assistant from Head Office.

Emphasis is placed upon encouraging young people to think for themselves about the personal purchases they need to make.

CARE PLANNING AND PLACEMENT PLAN

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school.
- Children's needs, development and progress is recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions.
- There are adequate records of both the staff and child groups of the school.
- 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.
- Children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living.
- Children receive individual support when they need it.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Each pupil has a written placement plan that encompasses educational and residential care needs. The plan is consistent with the local authority care plan and reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect significant changes in the child's needs, progress or development. Pupils are consulted about their placement plan on admission, during keyworking sessions and statutory educational and care reviews. One Inspector was able to observe an educational review where a pupil and parent were informed of the process and actively encouraged to contribute to the meeting and agree actions. During discussion with pupils, the majority were aware of their Placement Plan and happy with their contribution and the consultation process. Over two thirds of pupils were aware of their Placement Plan. The majority of pupils agreed with the plan and over two thirds were of the opinion that staff adhere to what is stated in the plan.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.5)

Each child has a permanent private and secure record of their history and progress which can, in compliance with legal requirements for safeguards, be seen by the child.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Each pupil has an individual file that contains all the information required in the standards. Individual files are located in the residential units and are stored securely. In addition to these files, there are individual pupil files, containing extremely sensitive information and otherwise basic information in the school office. Some residential staff stated that the medical consent is stored in the main school file and this may result in some delay in obtaining medical consent for pupils within the residential units. This is further detailed under the standard 'Health and Intimate Care'. Written entries were clearly identified and there was evidence of participation by pupils.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.3)

The school maintains clear and accurate records on the staff and child groups of the school, and major events affecting the school and children resident there.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

A selection of both pupil and staff files were inspected and found to be maintained in good order and containing up to date information. Accident logs, menus, duty rosters, diary of events and visitors logs were viewed and also found to be up to date.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Documentation examined showed clear evidence that staff are aware of any welfare concerns relating to each child, and can therefore act accordingly in terms of restricting access to individuals, as deemed necessary by the Courts, etc.

During the inspection, a number of the young people interviewed confirmed that they are able to make telephone contact with their parents, in private, whenever they wish.

During a visit to one of the living units, a young person was observed to be distressed and asking a staff member if she could 'go home' tonight rather than tomorrow. The staff person dealt with this sensitively and, after making contact with the parents, rearranged the evening in order to accommodate this request.

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.2)

Where a pupil is in care and will be leaving care on leaving the school, the school agrees with the young person's responsible authority what contribution it should make to implementing any Pathway or other plan for the pupil before the pupil leaves school. These arrangements are in line with that young person's needs, and the school implements its contribution where feasible from at least a year before the pupil is expected to leave care or move to independent living. The school works with any Personal Advisor for the child.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Meadows School accommodates children up to the age of 16. This standard does not apply in terms of leaving care, although the school undertake to prepare the children for leaving the school from age 14.

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

In discussions with boarding staff, supported by the inspectors reading policies, procedures and individual care plans, it was evident that the children receive individual support in line with their needs and wishes, that the school recognise difference and are sensitive to children experience difficulties, either in terms of feeling isolated, missing home, or finding difficulty in expressing their needs. The school does not have a dedicated counsellor, but pupils have access to an off site counselling service provided by a sister project. All children have a key worker to which they are encouraged to discuss any concerns they may have. Additionally, the inspectors met with the schools 'independent visitor', and on reading her reports it was evident that boarders felt able to talk freely to the visitor about personal issues, and the issues were then (if appropriate) followed through formally.

PREMISES

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children live in well designed, pleasant premises, providing sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs.
- Children live in accommodation that is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use.
- Children are able to carry out their ablutions in privacy and with dignity.
- Children live in schools that provide physical safety and security.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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There are four residential units, one for girls and three for boys. Two of the houses are located off site in nearby Tunbridge Wells and Southborough and the other two are located on campus. There are plans to rebuild Deacon House so it can provide single bedrooms for pupils. There is effective security to all houses that includes 24 hour CCTV. The layout and décor of the houses ensures that pupils enjoy a homely environment. The on-site houses provided pupils with spacious surroundings, plenty of open space where they can play and altogether a safe and secure environment where they can enjoy privacy and supervision by staff when necessary. The school has developed links with the local community and other schools to co-ordinate activities for pupils with other young people outside Meadows School.

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.19)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

Residential accommodation is well maintained and tastefully decorated. Good quality pine furniture has been purchased for Deacon House. Pupils stated that they have a say in the choice of décor. Deacon House and Broomhill House have private phone rooms for pupils. Shower rooms have been freshly decorated and there is an ongoing plan for maintenance and décor of both houses. It has been recognised that more single bedrooms would be desirable in Deacon House and this is being addressed in the schools Development Plan with the plan to rebuild the whole house and extend the property. Young people have welcomed this plan. The Team Leader informed the Inspectors that any request to change bedrooms is considered and agreed if feasible. Beds and bedding were sufficient and suitable. Rooms are well lit. Pupils have adequate storage space for clothes and a lockable safe storage for personal possessions. Pupils have personalised their bedrooms and consulted in the décor. Each house has adequate space where children can meet visitors in private. Sleep-in rooms are located close to children's bedrooms. Children are also supervised in high-risk areas by CCTV. This arrangement is discussed prior to admission and is in agreement with the placing officer, parent and pupil. During discussion with pupils, they stated that far from feeling that CCTV was an invasion of privacy, they favoured the set up stating they felt safe and that the cameras acted as "an extra member of staff". One Inspector spent an hour observing the night operators and was shown an example of how a boy had been ill in the night and brought this to the attention of the camera monitors, who alerted the sleep-in staff immediately.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.7)

The school has sufficient baths, showers and toilets, all of good standard and suitable to meet the needs of the children. The school has appropriate changing and washing facilities for incontinent children where necessary.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

There are ample baths, showers and toilets for the young people, with at least one toilet for every four accommodated. Staff and adult visitors use separate toilet, bathroom and shower facilities. Children stated that there are no issues with the toilets in the residential houses. It was raised at the time of the inspection that there were no thermostat controls fitted to any of the baths in the living units. Although stickers were advising 'HOT WATER', concern was expressed by the Inspector as to the potential dangers of scalding without the equipment in place to maintain a regulated temperature, i.e. 43 degrees. It was further advised that, even with such measures in place, regular manual testing of temperatures would be an added safeguard in monitoring that the thermostat controls are working properly.

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.10)

Positive steps are taken to keep children, staff and visitors safe from risk from fire and other hazards, in accordance with Health and Safety and Fire legislation and guidance.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The documentation seen included; Landlords Gas certificate, PAT testing certificates, Boiler checks and Fire risk assessments.

The Inspector was advised that Health and Safety Committee meetings are held on a half termly basis, with representatives attending from all living units. All accidents and Near misses are reviewed, as well as information and concerns raised as a result of the quarterly inspections that are conducted by a nominated external contractor. After each meeting, a summary sheet is completed, clearly defining actions required and who is responsible. Examples of such minutes were provided during the inspection and a copy of these is forwarded to the Chair of Governors.

An annual generic health and safety audit is completed in respect of all of the living units and examples of activity risk assessments detailing hazards and control measures were provided for inspection. These were found to be comprehensive and regularly reviewed.

STAFFING

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- There are careful selection and vetting of all staff, volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers
- Children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently.
- Children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs.
- Children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare.

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.9)

Recruitment of all staff (including ancillary staff and those employed on a contractual / sessional basis) and volunteers who work with the children in the school includes checks through the Criminal Records Bureau checking system (at Standard or Enhanced level as appropriate to their role in the school), with a satisfactory outcome. There is a satisfactory recruitment process recorded in writing.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The school's system for recruiting staff (including ancillary, contract/sessional staff and volunteers) who work with children in the school includes all the elements required under the National Minimum Standards. A selection of current staff files were inspected and found to include evidence of a robust recruitment procedure. All current staff have applied for a CRB Disclosure and the Head of Care explained that new staff would not commence employment without CRB clearance. . Original documentation is checked and recorded as such at Head Office. This was verified in files but confirmation of ID as required under 27.2(i) was not always recorded on the school's files. The Head was advised to discuss this matter with the school's Human Resources Department. The staff register is held on a database at the school.

Total number of care staff:

25

Number of care staff who left in last 12 months:

0

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.13)

The school is staffed at all times of the day and night, at or above the minimum level specified under standard 28.2. Records of staff actually working in the school demonstrate achievement of this staffing level.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The school's staffing policy ensures that the level of staffing is adequate to meet the Statement of Purpose. Staffing numbers are dependant on the resident numbers and stability of the group. There are at least 2 members of staff on duty in the morning and between 2 and 4 in the evening. The school does not use agency workers or volunteers but relies on a reliable group of relief workers who know the pupils and the school. Night Monitors assist the sleep-in staff from 9.30pm to 8am and will attend the units if necessary. Records of staff working and children sleeping in the residential units are recorded in the communication daily logs. The Head explained that risk assessments are carried out on numbers of staff working in the units and these are reviewed on a regular basis, additional staff can be brought in if the need arises. The night monitor attendants demonstrated great skills of observation and detection of potential incidents. They commented on risk assessments, and when they would need to act. Staff are able to carry out individual keyworking sessions with pupils and take them out to individual activities where necessary.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.6)

Staff receive training and development opportunities that equip them with the skills required to meet the needs of the children and the purpose of the school.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Examples of existing Induction packs were seen to be comprehensive and complete. Staff questioned advocated that the induction period is positive and informative and further inspection showed that supervision meetings occur on a monthly basis and detail the ongoing training needs of individuals.

Further evidence was seen to demonstrate that individuals have been seconded for DIPSW training and individuals are immediately placed on NVQ 3 training upon commencing with the organisation, if they don't already have it.

Evidence was seen, in the form of certificates, to demonstrate that statutory training, such as Food hygiene, Fire and Child protection courses have been completed. Currently, First aid is being updated.

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.13)

All staff, including domestic staff and the Head of the school, are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

The Head of Care informed the inspectors that staff supervision is carried out monthly. Staff are supervised through a line management system. The Head of care receives supervision from the Assistant Director of Children's services, although it is anticipated that the school Principal will undertake this task in the near future. The inspectors viewed supervision records, evidencing the frequency of supervision and topics discussed. These included: performance, feelings, concerns, stress, unit, children, staff, and training. The schools yearly appraisal system was looked at and found to be adequate. The inspectors were informed that the school holds weekly staff meetings. The school has a comprehensive induction programme, which must be signed off by the staff member and line manager

ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Children receive the care and services they need from competent staff.
- Children enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools.
- The governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school.

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.17)

The school is organised, managed and staffed in a manner that delivers the best possible child care.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The Head of Care holds the CQSW. He is starting NVQ level 4 in January 2003. All team leaders are qualified social workers, and all Deputy team leaders and Residential Social workers are qualified to NVQ level 3. The inspectors looked at staff rotas. Most record keeping, staff meetings, and general paperwork are completed during school hours when the unit is quiet. The inspectors were informed that children are given responsibility to support new children – similar to a ‘buddy’ system. This is closely monitored by staff. The school has completed risk assessments and planned responses to a range of foreseeable crises. All four homes have their own brochure. A brochure and prospectus is sent to all parents, providing contact telephone numbers of the local social services and the NCSC. The Head of Care assured the inspectors, that should the school go in to receivership, liquidation, or become bankrupt, the National Care Standards Commission will be informed within 24 hours.

The inspectors viewed the records required to be monitored and signed under standard 32.2, these were found to be adequately kept. Additionally, the Head of Care prepares and writes annually a report for Parents, Governors and the Board of Trustees. (Not seen).

Percentage of care staff with relevant NVQ or equivalent child care qualification:

100 %

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.5)

The National Care Standards Commission is informed within 24 hours if a receiver, liquidator or trustee in bankruptcy becomes responsible for the school. Such persons on becoming responsible for the school have ensured that the school continues to be managed on a day to day basis by a Head who meets recruitment and qualification requirements for a Head under these Standards. Such a temporary Head must make sure that the operation of the school meets the requirements of these standards in relation to the day to day running of the school.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The Head of Care assured the inspectors, that should the school go in to receivership, liquidation, or become bankrupt, the National Care Standards Commission will be informed within 24 hours.

The inspectors viewed the records required to be monitored and signed under standard 32.2, these were found to be adequately kept. Additionally, the Head of Care prepares and writes annually a report for Parents, Governors and the Board of Trustees; not inspected on this occasion.

Standard 33 (33.1 - 33.7)

The governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body receive a written report on the conduct of the school from a person visiting the school on their behalf half termly.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

An Independent Visitor carries out monthly visits and written reports on the conduct of the school. The National Care Standards Commission receives reports promptly. Reports of all action taken by the school on recommendations or issues of concern raised are also forwarded to the Lead Inspector.

PART C**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY****(where applicable)****Lay Assessor** _____ **Signature** _____**Date** _____**Lead Inspector** Sue Urwin **Signature** _____**Date** 31st January 2003**Public reports**

It should be noted that all NCSC inspection reports are public documents.

D.2 HEAD'S AGREEMENT

Head's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report of the above inspection.

**Head's statement of agreement/comments:
(Please delete one of the following before signature).**

D.2.1 I Mike Price of Meadows School confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I will seek to comply with the recommended actions set out in this report.

Or

D.2.2 I Mike Price of Meadows School am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s), for the following reasons:

Signed: _____

Designation: _____

Dated: _____

Note: In instances where there is a profound difference of view between the Inspector and the Principal, both views will be reported.

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