



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

Ratcliffe School

**John Nash Drive
Dawlish
Devon
EX7 9RZ**

Lead Inspector
Tina Maddison

Announced Inspection
9th January 2006 10:00

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

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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	Ratcliffe School
Address	John Nash Drive Dawlish Devon EX7 9RZ
Telephone number	(01626) 862939
Fax number	01626 888101
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school	Devon County Council Education Dept.
Name of Head	Cherie White
Name of Head of Care	R. D Furnivall
Age range of residential pupils	8 - 16
Date of last welfare inspection	14 th March 2005

Brief Description of the School:

Ratcliffe School is situated in woodland in the seaside town of Dawlish. It is a Devon County LEA school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, many of whom have additional learning difficulties. There are 38 pupils who board at the school and the school also offers an extended day for day pupils who benefit from staying for tea and evening activities.

The 5 residential buildings are near to the school building. These are named Dart, Otter, Culm, Exe and Tavy. One end of one of the houses has been made into a care provision for girls.

The school benefits from having 10 acres of grounds and offers the opportunities for nature walks, hard and soft play areas, and a building that houses a youth club.

SUMMARY

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

This announced inspection undertaken by two inspectors took place over three days. Care staff, pupils, the Head teacher, and the Head of care were interviewed. A tour of the school and residential care buildings were undertaken. A variety of documents and records were inspected. Meals were taken by the inspectors in both in the school dining room and in the residential houses. Twenty two questionnaires completed by parents/carers were returned.

What the school does well:

The Head Teacher, Staff and Governors are to be congratulated for the continuing high standard of care and social opportunities that they offer to the children, sometimes in extremely challenging circumstances. The staff competently and skillfully manage and care for the children at Ratcliffe. The meals offered to the children at the school are of a very good quality, and the children really enjoy them.

A number of the children that the school has been directed to admit recently by the Local Education Authority have very complex care and educational needs and extreme behaviours. These pupils have challenged the education and care given by the Head teacher and staff at the school. It is to their credit that high standards of care have been maintained for all pupils.

A high number of pre inspection questionnaires sent out to parents were returned to the Inspector. All were overwhelmingly positive about the care offered at the school. Quotes from the questionnaires included:

"Congratulations to all the staff for the extremely fantastic job they have done with my daughter, they are the best."

"I think they all need a medal giving to them."

"I think the best thing about the school is the accommodation the children stay in."

"It's the first school my grandson likes, and he comes home happy, not sad like he did in other schools."

“I would like to say a big thank you to all the staff for doing a great job.”

What has improved since the last inspection?

Since the last inspection, the refurbishment of Dart House has been completed to a high standard.

A supervision system for staff has now been put in place.

What they could do better:

One shower room in Tavy House would benefit from refurbishment. Since the inspection the Head Teacher has informed the Commission that this work has been completed. All houses with the exception of Dart House would benefit from redecoration. Consideration should be given to amending the school statement of purpose given the increasingly complex needs of the pupils being admitted to the school.

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

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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.

Children benefit from a healthy environment, and health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted. Meals are healthy, nutritious and attractively presented.

EVIDENCE:

Healthy living is promoted by the care staff, and the care provision at Ratcliffe offers the children a regular daily routine, a healthy diet and plenty of outdoor activities. Smoking is discouraged. All pupil health plans included details that met this standard. Children spoken to confirmed that they were encouraged to bath/shower each day.

All members of staff had a valid first aid training certificate. Prescribed medication was dispensed by an appropriately trained care staff member. Medication records were found to be accurate and well kept. There was a controlled drug cabinet in each house for the storage of prescribed and controlled medication. Staff interviewed were familiar with the schools medication policies and procedures. Illnesses, accidents and injuries were recorded and dealt with appropriately. Any refusal to take medication was recorded, and the incident reported to senior staff.

The children ate breakfast in the houses, and lunch was taken in the school dining room. A choice of meals was offered, and children confirmed that they thought the food was very good at the school. Special diets are offered by the school. Menus were seen by the inspector and evidenced that a variety of healthy nutritious food is offered to the pupils.

The dining rooms in the houses were pleasant, and on the days of the inspection, meal times were an orderly, pleasant and relaxed occasion.

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):

3,4,5,6,7,8,10,26,27.

Staff at the school make every effort to ensure that the children are physically and emotionally safe whilst at the school. Behavioural issues are dealt with competently and safely.

EVIDENCE:

The school has a policy and procedures regarding privacy, and during the inspection it was observed that staff always respected the privacy of children in all situations. The care staff had achieved a balance of always being on hand and observant whilst keeping a discreet distance and allowing the children privacy. It was found that records are kept securely in the office. Children can use a telephone in private in all the houses. The school has a complaints procedure in place, and children spoken to confirmed that they were aware of

how to make a complaint and to whom. An independent listener and counsellor are available for pupils to speak to if they need to. Posted around the school are posters concerning anti bullying. The school holds special events to highlight issues around bullying. Care staff were aware that bullying could take place in the school, and it was clear that bullying would not be tolerated at the school, with measures in place to deal with the issue.

Child protection training has been undertaken by staff, and the school holds comprehensive policies and procedures regarding child protection issues. Records evidenced that any notifiable incidents had been recorded and sent to the appropriate authorities. The school works closely with other professionals to ensure the mental and emotional health of the pupils and to secure any assessment that was required. The school also works very closely with the parents and placing authority to ensure the best possible outcomes for the pupils.

The school has a policy and procedure in place to deal with the incidence of a pupil leaving the school campus and going missing whilst on an outing. An incident of this nature occurred during the inspection, and it was evident that staff handled the incident most competently. Pupils are closely supervised whilst on site, due to their complex needs. There is a register in each house to record which children were in residence.

The school provides care for children with complex and challenging needs. It is to be congratulated for the caring and professional way the staff meet these needs and manage the care of the children. A "traffic light" system of managing behaviour is in place, and the staff and children spoken to by the inspectors were most clear about this system, and the consequences of both positive and negative behaviours. In the instance of extreme challenging behaviour, excessive sanctions were not carried out, rather an alternative method of working with that child was created.

Physical intervention is used as a last resort. All staff received training in the "Team Teach" method and use early intervention and de-escalation techniques. A written record of all physical interventions was kept in a bound and numbered book.

The inspectors observed that throughout the inspection the children were always polite and helpful, and throughout meals taken with them were well behaved with excellent table manners. Staff were always quick to contain any bad language or excitement that may have escalated. This was achieved by staff in a positive way and often with appropriate humour that diffused a potentially difficult situation. In the mornings it was observed by the Inspector that the stability and individual attention that the pupils received calmed them and prepared them for school.

The maintenance of health and safety is a priority at the school. Gas and electrical systems and appliances are maintained appropriately. All houses and the grounds are regularly risk assessed. Risk assessments are undertaken on all pupils, and all activities that they undertake. Fire safety precautions are regularly checked and records evidenced that this is done on a regular basis. Hazardous substances are locked away. One window restrictor in a bedroom was broken, but by the end of the three day inspection had been repaired.

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.

Children enjoy a range of purposeful and enjoyable activities whilst at school, in a structured and caring environment.

EVIDENCE:

The care staff and education staff were observed to work closely as an effective team. There were care staff available during the day to offer support in the classroom. Care staff also contributed to all school review reports, and attended meetings regarding the pupils. This ensures consistency and continuity throughout the day.

The school offers a good range of activities after school time to suit the ages and skills of all the pupils. There was a balance of free time and time for organised activities. The school provides transport to activities off site and activities on site available if preferred. The school offers a youth club on site that the children said that they enjoyed. Activities that take place in the evenings were very well organised and thought out by staff, and obviously enjoyed by the children. These activities included rugby, skateboarding, computer club, and cinema trips. An annual holiday is arranged, and last year children enjoyed either a trip to France, camping trip or a holiday in London. Pupils were aware that they could talk to staff at any time. The school also has a counsellor available for pupils to discuss any issues that are troubling them. If any pupil requires specialist help then the school makes every effort to obtain this help. "Team Teach" is used in the school and all members of staff have been used in this technique and training was updated annually.

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):

2,9,11,17,20.

Children boarding at Ratcliffe are encouraged to communicate their views, and these views are listened to and acted upon. Children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and respect.

EVIDENCE:

Children confirmed that they are encouraged to offer their views. Regular house meetings give all pupils an opportunity to air their views. There is also a school council, that consists of The Principal, 2 teachers, 2 pupils from each house, 1 care staff, 1 catering staff, 1 caretaking or cleaning staff and 1 invited Governor. Children said that they thought that these meetings were helpful. It was observed during the inspection that there were very positive relationships between the children and the staff, and on a number of occasions staff very skillfully de-escalated potentially disruptive incidents. Staff appeared to be firm, fair and very consistent when dealing with pupils. Acceptable and positive behaviour was very much encouraged and praised when achieved by the pupils. Staff reported that a small minority of pupils cause a great deal of challenges to staff time, and it was felt by staff that they are policing these children rather than providing an education.

All pupils had a placement plan on file. All children at the school have a statement of educational needs. Placement plans included all the information as required by standard 17.5. Additional information had been gathered from

involved health and social care professionals and parents and carers. A key worker system is in operation. Education staff and care staff had contributed to the regular reviews. The pupils were able to attend their review meetings if they wished.

Communication between the school and home was reported to be very good by parents and carers who completed the pre inspection questionnaire. Parents and carers confirmed that they are encouraged to contact the school if they had any concerns, and all stated that they were always made to feel welcome when they visited the school, and that staff always made time to speak with them. Pupils leaving the school have a planned leaving time, including goodbye parties.

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):

16,23,24,25.

The accommodation provided at the school is pleasant and well designed. Some refurbishment is desirable on three of the houses. Children staying at the school can be sure that their privacy and dignity will be respected by staff.

EVIDENCE:

It was observed by the Inspectors that children are able to wear their own clothing outside of school time. The amount of money brought in to the school by pupils was minimal as the pupils board weekly.

The houses offering accommodation are sited in the school grounds and are adjacent to woodland. The site is not secure, but doors into and within the school and houses were secured by keypads. The numbers on the keypads were known only to the staff and were changed regularly. CCTV cameras were installed in the corridors and in the houses and the grounds. All visitors to the school are requested to sign in and out at reception. The communal areas in the houses are spacious and have been individually decorated in bright and cheerful colours. It is hoped that in the future all children will have individual bedrooms. All of the houses were found to be warm, clean and homely on the day of the inspection. Damage to any part of the houses and school was seen to be dealt with promptly, and there was no sign of graffiti. Extensive refurbishment has been carried out in Dart House, and the pupils that board there were very proud of how modern the furnishings were, and how it had

been decorated to a high standard. All the houses have a games room, and areas where pupils can have peace and quiet if they wish. Bedrooms were well equipped, and pupils said they were encouraged to put their possessions in the rooms and to individualise them. The number of Bath and shower facilities in each house were adequate. The shower in Tavy House would benefit from refurbishment. Since this inspection this work has been completed. Parents commented that they felt three of the houses would benefit from a "facelift" to a similar standard that is enjoyed by the pupils in Dart House. Staff were observed to knock on bedroom doors prior to entering, and children confirmed that their privacy was respected by staff.

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):

1,18,19,28,29,30,31,32,33.

The school is well run and staffed by a well supported care team who understand the children's care needs and are able to meet them consistently and competently.

EVIDENCE:

There was a statement of purpose and a comprehensive prospectus that described the overall purpose of the school. They outline the provision offered to pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Recently the school has been directed by the LEA to admit increasing numbers of pupils who have complex educational and care needs, and have had to increase staffing. Additionally staff need to have increased skill levels to deal with the increasing confrontational and demanding behaviours of the children. During the inspection the inspectors witnessed staff dealing with some very difficult behaviours in a most skilled and professional manner. However, this constant

confrontational behaviour is very wearing on staff and it is a testament to the total commitment and skills of the care staff and educational staff that they continue to maintain such high standards of professionalism.

Pupil files contained all the information required by standard 18.2. The daily handwritten record was entered on the computer system by the waking staff every night, and was downloaded as necessary. Records kept on pupils are securely kept, and contained a physical description and photograph. One staff record did not contain two written references, but concerned a member of staff previously employed by, and known to the school and references have been obtained since the inspection. All staff members had a current CRB check. A record of accidents was kept, and were dated and signed. Menus are kept for at least a year. Staff rotas were seen, and evidenced an adequate number of care staff are on duty at all times. Staff supervised pupils closely at all times and each member of staff carries a radio to help them keep in touch with colleagues and summon help if necessary. The care staff are on duty to assist in the classroom if necessary, and this is happening more frequently now, due to the increasingly challenging behaviour of the pupils. At nights there is one sleeping in member of staff and the waking night staff monitors the houses by use of a CCTV system.

All staff members undertake an induction programme when appointed. The school has a rolling programme of training. Each member of staff has a personal development plan. Staff interviewed confirmed that they believed that they are appropriately trained for their jobs. Staff were aware of the issues of their accountability, and where they could get support. Staff were observed to work extremely well as a team, and support each other. Staff confirmed that they were well supported by the Principal, senior staff, colleagues and the Governors of the school. The care staff team hold a daily meeting prior to the pupils coming out of school. A supervision system for staff has been put in place since the last inspection.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

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

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

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
14	3
15	4

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

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

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

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
16	3
21	3
23	3
24	3
25	2

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

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	RS25	Refurbishment of one shower situated in Tavy house should be considered.	
2	RS24	Consideration should be given to refurbishing Tavy House, Exe House and Colme House to the same standard as Dart House.	
3	RS19	Staff records should contain two written references and be available for inspection.	

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