



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL

Meadows School

London Road
Southborough
Tunbridge Wells
Kent
TN4 0RJ

Lead Inspector
Sophie Wood

Key Unannounced Inspection
6th November 2006 09:30

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

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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	Meadows School
Address	London Road Southborough Tunbridge Wells Kent TN4 0RJ
Telephone number	01892 529144
Fax number	01892 527787
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school	Meadows Memorial School
Name of Head	Mr Mike Price
Name of Head of Care	Mr Vaughan Jackson
Age range of residential pupils	11 – 16 years
Date of last welfare inspection	7 th & 8 th November 2005

Brief Description of the School:

Meadows School is situated in Southborough, Kent and is a non - maintained residential special school, owned by Barnardo's Children's Charity. The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and at full occupancy it looks after 38 boarders and an additional 14 'day – pupils'.

The residential provision offers a separate house for girls, situated in a residential area of Southborough and three houses for boys. Two of these buildings are located within the school's grounds and the third is within walking distance of the town centre of Tunbridge Wells.

The school building was completed in 1993 and the provision of an art room, food tech room, science lab, ICT suites, etc means that all of the requirements of the national curriculum are met. Each house is run by a team of staff and all members hold a minimum qualification of NVQ 3 in care, and staffing levels remain high. Detailed care planning results in individual strategies being implemented and the high staff: pupil ratio ensures that the necessary attention is provided.

The current fee for a boarding placement at the school is £81,000.00 per annum.

SUMMARY

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

This inspection started on Monday, 6th November and was completed by regulatory inspectors Sophie Wood and Lynnette Gajjar. Over two days the boarding houses were visited, important members of staff were interviewed and written records were read.

Young people were spoken with, on their own and in groups and they were also joined for meals and after – school activities to find out how they think they are looked after.

Written questionnaires were filled in by boarders, their parents, placing social workers, the local GP and care staff. Overall, some very good things had been written about the school.

Examples of comments received included:

“They do a great job” (parent).

“Staff always make you feel welcome” (parent).

“School rules are sensible and realistic” (parent).

“I can always talk to my Key - worker” (Boarder).

“They listen to us and are caring – like a second family” (Boarder).

“I have no concerns about this school” (GP).

“He is safe at the school” (Placing Officer).

“Good training opportunities – need more support at the moment – difficult time” (Staff member).

Over recent weeks, the school has received a number of new boarders quite quickly and this has sometimes been difficult for the staff and boarders already living there. The school needs to think about how new boarders are introduced and the staff and existing pupils are congratulated for their hard work and patience during this time of change.

Extra inspection material was obtained by reading Principal’s self assessment and pre – inspection questionnaire and written comments, which were sent by the Chair of the Board of Governors.

What the school does well:

- ◆ The school continues to have a team of teaching and care staff who have been there for a long time. They know the pupils well and work hard to meet their needs.
- ◆ Staff have good relationships with the pupils and keep them safe.
- ◆ Individual care plans for boarders are clear and tell the staff how each boarder should be looked after.
- ◆ Staff use written risk assessments and keep a close eye on all behaviour to avoid pupils being bullied by others. When it does happen, it is quickly and properly dealt with.
- ◆ Boarders are supported to enjoy the leisure activities and hobbies of their choice and they receive meals and snacks, which are good for them.

What has improved since the last inspection?

- ◆ The school has employed an independent counsellor to do individual work with young people and to make better links with the local CAMHS team.
- ◆ A 'Head of Day – Pupils' has been appointed.
- ◆ All pupils now have lockable storage in their bedrooms to keep their things safe.
- ◆ Pupils' individual risk assessments have been updated and health files have been reviewed and amended; this was recommended at the last inspection.
- ◆ 'Infection control' has improved. This means keeping areas clean and making sure boarders only use their own washing materials.

What they could do better:

- ◆ The school needs to look at how boarders are introduced into the houses, particularly when a number join at one time.

- ◆ The school needs to make sure that all of the boarding houses are of the same good standard. This means that more work is needed to improve the girls' house.
- ◆ The school should make sure that care staff receive the support and training they require to make sure the boarders receive the care they need.

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. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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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)

The Commission considers Standard 14 the key standard to be inspected.

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

14, 15.

Quality in this outcome area is excellent.

Pupils benefit from having their primary health needs accurately assessed and met.

Meals are healthy and nutritious and individual dietary needs are catered for.

This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

The health needs of boarders continue to be explicitly recorded within a dedicated 'health care' section, within individual care files. This includes information pertaining to physical, mental and emotional well – being. Given the quality of this written detail, all care staff are able to access this information and understand the type and nature of care and support they are required to provide when on duty.

All visits made to external health care providers were clearly recorded in writing by residential staff and every staff member had attended accredited medication training. The medication / health care policy and procedure, subject to recent review and amendment, was explicit and clear. It was understood by the care team and implemented in practice.

The storage and administration of medicines was observed, with no errors noted and the staff member with a lead responsibility for the monitoring of

health plans and medication auditing was interviewed. Again, she demonstrated a sound awareness of her role and responsibilities; she continues to conduct regular audits and had fully implemented the few recommendations made from the previous visit.

The recent appointment of an independent counsellor was viewed positively and the 'anger management' initiative, the school's own 'SOLO group' continues to be well attended. As was reported from the previous inspection, the school is working hard to form positive links with the local CAMHS team, as referrals to this body unfortunately often result in long waiting times for services.

The main school kitchen was toured, the catering manager was interviewed and meals were taken with pupils. Although a number of 'negative' responses were received through student questionnaires, these were largely relating to "too much healthy food – not enough chips".

The kitchen was clean, well – equipped and hazard – free; all catering staff remained up – to – date with regards food hygiene training and menus showed a broad range of choice, albeit these were 'nutritious, healthy' options opposed to by the students!

Residential staff had also received relevant food hygiene training; kitchens within the boarding houses were well – stocked and boarders confirmed they were regularly consulted with regards meal planning. Individual boarders further confirmed they are able to make snacks for themselves and no boarder complained of ever being hungry or without food they did not like.

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)

The Commission considers Standards 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 26 and 27 the key standards to be inspected.

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

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

Quality in this outcome area is excellent.

Boarders are well – protected from all forms of abuse; they live in a safe environment, which provides robust safeguards.

This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

Comprehensive written guidance continues to be extensively covered throughout staff induction training. Members of the residential staff team were interviewed and every member was clear about the school's own policy with regards the handling of confidential information and how this should be shared / passed on.

Pupils were fully aware of complaints processes and written records were seen to support this.

Since the previous inspection visit, the Commission has continued to receive both written and telephone notification from the Head of Care with regards any incident, which denotes a 'child protection' concern. Likewise, the local and responsible placing authorities of pupils have also been made fully aware of incidents and concerns relating to pupils of the school, demonstrating an open and transparent way of working, in the best interests of those placed.

Incidents of absconding remain rare; any, which do occur, are promptly reported, with written records demonstrating appropriate subsequent action being taken.

Incidents of bullying reported by pupils through interviews and returned questionnaires remained very low. Such incidents reported had been clearly documented, with appropriate action taken with regards the perpetrator and victim. Individual staff members were familiar with the school's policy and procedure and it was evident that swift action had been taken.

Five individual staff personnel files were randomly selected in order to scrutinise the school's recruitment, induction and supervision processes; thus, a mixture of new and long – standing employees were selected for this purpose. Those files pertaining to more recent appointments held sufficient documentation in terms of written references, verified by telephone contact, proof of identity and evidence of previous relevant experience / training. Interview panel notes were held on file as was relevant induction, supervision, investigation and disciplinary material.

Following the previous inspection recommendation, the question with regards any gaps within written CV's / previous employment history, is now explicitly asked and recorded within the interview process.

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)

The Commission considers Standards 12 and 22 the key standards to be inspected.

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

12, 13, 22.

Quality in this outcome area is excellent.

Boarders receive consistent, meaningful support, which enhances their educational attainment. They enjoy excellent access to leisure activities and are appropriately supported by their care givers.

This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

Teaching staff again commended the efforts of the residential team in ensuring that homework is completed and boarders arrive on time and 'ready' for the school day.

Shift patterns within the boarding houses continue to be worked in order that residential staff are able to provide classroom and break time support; this proves an invaluable resource for both pupils and teachers. The morning and afternoon meetings between the two staff groups enhances communication and consistency of working with individual pupils.

Pupil review meetings are attended by representatives from the teaching and residential teams; written minutes of these meetings and individual care plans

showed clear evidence of collaborative working between the two groups, with appropriate and meaningful targets being set.

Individual care plans were scrutinised and these held explicitly clear details with regards the unique and specific support that each individual boarder requires. A clear key working system remains in place, however; every member of staff interviewed demonstrated a sound awareness as to the needs of all of those in their care, not simply the individual for whom they held a key worker responsibility.

Liaison with the local CAMHS team continues to remain a focussed, key issue as the school remains concerned that referrals to this service do at times lead to unacceptable waiting times.

Houses were visited after school in order to observe evening and extra – curricular activities. Boarders confirmed good consultation processes with regards choosing leisure activities and records showed a realistic budget / staffing allocation, in order for hobbies and interests to be pursued. Boarders were particularly positive that they could spend time with their friends living in other boarding houses and also pursue individual interests, not just group activities.

Some time was spent during this visit observing the evening routine at one particular house. The staff and boarders appeared relaxed and comfortable and whilst the evening meal was being prepared, everyone was contributing ideas as to how the evening would be spent.

This particular group of individuals is still very 'new', with boarders all getting to know each other, the staff team and the service in general. Those staff observed, and the long – standing boarders present are commended for their efforts and tolerance during this time.

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)

The Commission considers Standards 2, 17 and 20 the key standards to be inspected.

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

2, 9, 11, 17, 20.

Quality in this outcome area is good.

Pupils receive clear information before joining the school and they enjoy positive relationships with their care - givers.

Assessments and care plans are thorough and informative.

Admission processes would benefit from further review.

This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

The school's own documentation, including its statement of purpose, guides to individual boarding houses, rules and procedures are clearly written in a style and language readily understood by the pupils and parents of the school.

Forums exist whereby pupils are encouraged to express their own thoughts and ideas and those interviewed said they are listened and responded to appropriately. Notably, the older, longer – standing boarders talked the most positively about this aspect, with statements including, “You appreciate when you’re older that they nag you because they care about you”, and “Staff get on your nerves at first, but you only get punished because you did something wrong and they want you to learn”.

As has been noted through previous inspections, staff members were again observed to interact positively and respectfully with those in their care. Appropriate interventions and sanctions were clearly recorded within the written documentation scrutinised.

Care plans and boarders’ individual files held similar good quality details; it was easy to find evidence of ongoing assessments and review decisions. With regards initial assessments, evidence was seen to demonstrate that key information is sought from parents, the prospective pupil and other associated professional agencies, before a placement is offered. That said, the school is advised to consider and review the impact of making four new admissions into one boarding house over the course of a few weeks.

A clear policy exists and is implemented in practice in terms of working collaboratively with parents. Boarders were observed to make telephone contact during the course of this visit and many said, “I can always phone home without any difficulty”. Boarders have access to private pay phones, their own mobiles and the house ‘office’ phone. Care files held clear written details of contact being made between staff and parents on a regular basis and the comments received through parent questionnaires were very positive, although a few said the school should sometimes implement stricter punishments.

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, 21, 23, 24, 25.

Quality in this outcome area is adequate.

Pupils benefit from being appropriately supported to develop the skills they will need for adulthood.

The physical environment is variable in terms of the standard of living accommodation.

This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

The main school building was completed in 1993 and boasts excellent classroom provision, which continues to be modernised and updated routinely. Small classes and intensive support enables pupils to access the national curriculum in a way that best suits their individual needs.

Two of the boarding houses are on the school site, the girls' house is in nearby Southborough and the remaining boys' house is within walking distance of

Tunbridge Wells town centre. Thus, all four houses remain within easy reach of local and community resources.

Boarders were observed to change into their own clothing upon returning from school and written records showed robust financial procedures in terms of holding money securely and enabling individuals to manage it appropriately. The physical standard of boarding accommodation remains variable, with the two houses on site offering an excellent living environment. The property in Tunbridge Wells has improved and residential staff commended the support they receive from the maintenance team.

This leaves the girls' house, which requires attention for it to offer a standard in line with the other residences.

Equipment within the 'flat' was not fully working, for example the cooker and this resource is underused.

Boarders complained of being cold, particularly those occupying bedrooms at the front of the house; the entire property has its original windows in place and a tour of the upstairs in particular confirmed the girls' statements.

One of the showers was not working and the majority of the girls do not like a particular bathroom. This leaves one dedicated shower room in constant demand by eight girls and this is clearly problematic during the morning, when getting ready for school.

All of the houses were clean and furnished to a good standard. Staff were observed to encourage boarders to respect their surroundings and take care of the property within.

Given the disparity described, the school is strongly advised to critically review its residential provision.

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)

The Commission considers Standards 1, 28, 31 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.

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

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

Quality in this outcome area is good.

Written information about the school is clear and informative.

Sound and robust monitoring processes are effective.

The training and support needs of staff would benefit from additional review.

This Judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

Explanatory literature for prospective parents and pupils is clear, concise and subject to ongoing review.

Care files were well – ordered and contained clear information; they were being securely held and could only be accessed by those with authority / permission.

Staff personnel files were also being securely held and four were randomly selected for closer inspection. In the main, the content was satisfactory; in particular proof of identity, CRB checking and a sound interview process was evidenced. Not all files were clearly ordered and it was not possible to locate one particular record of induction. A review of all personnel files was recommended to ensure each is of the same good standard.

Excellent sources of evidence were found to demonstrate clear and robust monitoring and quality assurance processes. It was very positive to note that all staff retained a strict sense of responsibility and accountability for their practice, which is then further demonstrated by heads of departments, the Principal and Standard 33 Visitor.

Emphasis continues to be placed upon good quality induction training, which is subsequently followed by further, relevant courses. Team leaders possess NVQ 4 and the school aims to have every other member of the residential team to have completed NVQ 3 by the end of this academic year. Given the continued changing needs of the pupils being referred to the school, for example, a higher number being diagnosed with varying degrees of Autism and the presentation of more challenging behaviours, the school is strongly advised to review its staff training programme to ensure the skills and competencies of the team continue to meet the needs of the pupils.

A mixed response was received from the staff group interviewed in terms of the support and training they receive. Some stated that supervision meetings have not always occurred with their previous usual regularity and a number felt they could have been better consulted with regards recent admissions into the service. Two staff vacancies are currently being covered, as well as some sickness and maternity leave; all of these factors should be carefully explored to ensure the continued motivation of the residential team.

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	4
15	4

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

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	4
13	3
22	4

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

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

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	3
18	3
19	3
28	3
29	4
30	3
31	4
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.	RS11	The school is strongly advised to review its admission processes in the event of more than one being made at a time.	
2.	RS19	It is recommended that the contents of staff personnel records be reviewed to ensure they are all of the same good standard.	
3.	RS23 & RS23 & RS24	The school is strongly advised to review its boarding accommodation provision with particular attention to be paid towards the girls' house.	
4.	RS29	It is recommended that the training programme for residential staff be reviewed in recognition of the changing needs of the pupils.	
5.	RS30	It is recommended that an audit be conducted of all staff supervision meetings, to ensure these are occurring in accordance with the school's own guidance. It is also recommended that additional effort be made to ensure staff members are appropriately supported throughout significant changes.	

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