

Vale of Evesham School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

Unique reference number	SC043049
Inspection date	20/10/2009
Inspector	Julian Mason
Type of inspection	Key

Setting address	Vale of Evesham School, Four Pools Lane, EVESHAM, Worcestershire, WR11 1BN
Telephone number	01386 443367
Email	ww@valeofevesham.worcs.sch.uk
Registered person	Worcestershire County Council Children Services Department
Head/ Principal	Ann Starr
Nominated person	Ann Starr
Date of last inspection	05/12/2008

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good: this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

The Vale of Evesham School provides education for children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders and Learning Disabilities. The majority of children receive day education but there is provision for boarding, always described as the boarding school, which can accommodate 15 children and young people up to the age of 19 years, as weekly boarders. The boarding accommodation is placed on the first floor and consists of three suites, one of which is very separate from the other two. Each of the suites are staffed with its own team of care staff under a care officer, all of whom are responsible to the head of care. The school is maintained by the local education authority, Worcestershire County Council Department of Education and is directly responsible to a governing body.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

No recommendations were made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The quality of boarding is outstanding with the service exceeding many national minimum standards. No recommendations from the school's last welfare inspection were made. The quality of care being provided is exceptional. This is because the school's values and aims are embraced and promoted in a way that consistently recognises young people's individual needs and their potential. Young people are cared for by a residential team who are very knowledgeable and aware of how to provide a supportive, safe and nurturing residential environment. Staff pay particular attention to the development of young people's communication skills. This is given a very high priority by the school so all young people can fully participate and contribute to the way in which they are looked after.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Young people's care and support is underpinned by clearly written policies that promote inclusion and equality. Staff gather a comprehensive range of information to ensure the support provided is individualised and unique. Young people are treated fairly and with equal concern. This means that staff fully promote young people's social inclusion and prevent any form of discrimination or unfairness.

Young people's health and wellbeing is closely monitored. The school works in partnership with a range of services that link with the school nurse, teachers, families, residential staff as well as community health professionals. Staff and families are well informed about the changing health needs and circumstances of each young person. This is because the school has excellent and effective lines of communication that help to share necessary information quickly. This helps staff adapt plans and arrangements for the management of complex and frequently changing needs like diabetes and epilepsy. Practice routines for the administration of medication are well established. There are a small number of gaps in the medication records that do not match some prescription instructions. Young people are receiving their medication but occasionally the records do not reflect this.

Food and mealtime arrangements are excellent. Any religious, cultural or dietary

needs are incorporated into menus which are flexible and appropriate to personal choices and preferences. Young people are helped to stay fit and healthy; they exercise regularly because they participate in a range of physical activities that are fun and engaging.

Young people feel very safe in their residential units. Staff have completed the necessary checks to ensure they are suitable to work young people. The school has an excellent focus on safeguarding and protection matters. This is because there are clear policies that are communicated effectively to promote young people's welfare. Managers have effective links and work in partnership with external agencies that have a lead responsibility for child protection in their area. All staff have received child protection training which helps to strengthen the school-wide approach to safeguarding. These arrangements help staff know what their role and responsibilities are and what to do if they have a concern about a young person.

Young people are provided with very useful guidance and support about how to manage their behaviour. This is because staff are trained and very experienced at incorporating coaching and learning strategies into daily life that are supportive and beneficial. Staff are very positive in their approach to behaviour management and this helps towards young people managing their own behaviour safely.

Each young person receives focused, individual support from a professional and well trained team of staff. Young people's needs are well known because staff have access to a detailed and comprehensive range of information. In addition, close attention is paid to developing relationships that enable staff to gain further insight and understanding about individual needs. The residential routines and approach fully support young people to be successful learners, develop their life skills and promote independence. Close working partnerships between teaching and care staff offers great consistency and continuity for young people throughout the school day.

Young people are fully supported to maintain contact with their families. Parents and carers receive regular progress reports and staff stay in regular touch to keep them informed of events and developments. Family contact and information sharing contribute to young people being settled and happy.

The residential accommodation is well maintained, very clean and tidy with good-quality décor and furnishings. Young people's bedrooms are highly personalised, decorated and furnished with their own possessions and personal items. The accommodation and personal care routines are organised in a way that respects young people's privacy. Young people are provided with homely and comfortable boarding accommodation.

The residential provision has outstanding leadership that consistently promotes an environment where young people's safety and welfare is paramount. Managers know what the school does well and what areas need to be developed. For instance, lunchtime arrangements have been modernised, young people have access to a new sensory room and photographs of events and activities are added to personal diaries so parents have a better representation of what goes on at school. In addition, the

quality of individual communication profiles has been improved and there is increased access to recreational activities. The senior management team have a clear agenda on maintaining and improving residential services that are necessary in meeting each young person's needs. Many of the developments are viewed positively and are as a result of staff listening to the views and opinions of young people.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Compliance with national minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- ensure a written record is kept of all medication administered to young people. (NMS 14)