

# Loxley Hall

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Katarina Djordjevic
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<b>Head/ Principal</b>	
<b>Nominated person</b>	Richard Redgate
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	19/05/2010

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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

Loxley Hall School is a residential and day special school providing education for students with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. The school is situated in a rural setting, a few miles outside the town of Uttoxeter. The main building is a large, two storey country house. Rooms on the ground floor consist of offices, a main kitchen, a dining hall and communal rooms for all students.

The residential provision, which is a detached house, is situated in the school grounds and has its own secure access. There is a kitchen, dining room, two lounges, toilet and shower room and staff office. On the first floor there are bedrooms, shower and bathing facilities. There is a large rear garden.

The school caters for boys between the ages of 11 and 16 years. The residential provision operates Monday to Friday each week during term time. There is a flexible boarding arrangement, with students being able to stay a maximum of two nights a week. The school also offers an extended day where students stay in school until approximately 8pm. They have their evening meal and take part in activities. There are 20 students who currently access the residential provision.

### Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was a key announced inspection. The purpose of this inspection was to meet the statutory requirement of one announced inspection visit each year. All key standards were inspected and standards 9, 11, 13, 18, 21, 24 and 29 were also inspected. All outcomes are judged as outstanding.

This remains an outstanding service where students make significant progress during their time at the school, not just academically but also socially and emotionally. This can be attributed to the whole school team approach where improving lives of students is paramount and where students thrive in a trusting, nurturing and safe environment. The culture of the whole school is based on mutual respect, accepting difference, sharing and helping each other. As a result, students learn to respect themselves and others, while at the same time developing necessary life skills. Students are supported to take assessed risks which helps them prepare for adulthood and the wider world. They feel safe and are able to raise any concerns they may have and feel listened to. The management of behaviour is excellent where staff present as positive role models and praise students for their achievements. Excellent partnerships exist between staff and parents and carers. The care and education students receive and the progress they make while at the school are recognised and very much appreciated by parents and carers and students themselves. A sample of comments received from parents and carers include:

'absolutely wonderful, wouldn't have been able to carry on without their support', and, 'can't praise them enough'.

One recommendation has been made to ensure all records are signed and dated by the author.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection the school was asked to explore ways of enabling students to be more involved in contributing to their placement plans. Students are now encouraged to write comments in their placement and behaviour management plans.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Students live with their parents or carers, who have overall responsibility for their child's health needs. However, the active promotion of healthy lifestyles is clearly embedded in the school's ethos and practice. Students' health needs are well documented in their care records. Staff receive a variety of training which includes basic first aid and food hygiene. This enables staff to meet the health and cultural needs of students.

Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and go way beyond what is expected of them in ensuring students' health needs are met. This requires working closely with parents, carers and other professionals. Exceptional support is given by staff with regard to the emotional well-being of students, and in some instances, their families. Staff also advocate on behalf of students and their families when needing to access specialist services.

Robust procedures are in place to ensure that medicines are appropriately handled and stored to safeguard students' welfare. All staff receive training in the administration of medication. Records of medication administered are kept. Although the head of care and the facilities manager are designated to oversee medication procedures, in practice, all staff share the responsibility for ensuring that students receive medication as prescribed. This helps to protect students from the risk of harm and they are further protected by the thorough and effective monitoring of records and staff practice.

Students learn about healthy eating and how to stay healthy. Exercise is seen as an important part of keeping healthy and students have a wide range of opportunities to exercise, which they thoroughly enjoy. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools status. All food is freshly cooked on the premises by trained staff. Menus reflect a wide range of healthy eating options which provide choices for students, and special dietary needs are catered for. Menus for lunchtime include choices of two main meals and a salad bar and include different cultural meals. Care is taken to ensure menus in residence are different to those provided during the school day. Students are able to have some influence over the menus which is possible through regular

meetings with the deputy head of care and the catering manager. Lunchtime meals are lively but relaxed with good interaction between students and staff. Students have good manners and are helpful to each other. At teatime, students and staff use mealtimes to catch up on the day's events and decide what activities they want to do for the evening.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

Safeguarding is at the forefront of practice in the school. Students are safeguarded by a highly committed and competent staff team who are fully aware of their responsibilities to raise any concerns they may have about the welfare of students. At the same time, staff also recognise the importance of enabling students to take controlled risks in a safe and nurturing environment. This allows students to learn how to keep themselves safe in preparation for adulthood and teaches students to take responsibility for their actions and the impact of their actions on others. Staff receive a range of training in safeguarding including child protection, behaviour management, bullying, and health and safety. The range of policies and procedures which staff fully understand are successfully implemented.

There are comprehensive systems for monitoring students' well-being and safety. The senior leadership team meets each morning to discuss any issues that may be of concern or affecting individual students and takes action where necessary. This includes contacting families, carers and social workers when necessary.

Staff present as positive role models, and respecting each other underpins practice throughout the school. Staff understand the need for confidentiality and records are kept securely.

Open and nurturing relationships exist between students and staff which enable students to raise any concerns they may have in a safe and listening environment. Students know how to complain but rarely need to use the complaints procedure as there are different forums for them to make their views known. This can also be attributed to the open and trusting relationships that exist with staff.

There is a real commitment in the school to deal with bullying. There is a designated staff member who oversees the implementation of the anti-bullying policy and monitors all incidents. Systems and practices successfully help to protect students from the risk of bullying. At the same time students learn to respect each other and learn about the impact their behaviour has on others. The school has continued to achieve the local authority's anti-bullying charter. Students know that bullying is not tolerated and incidents will be taken seriously. There are robust systems in place to minimise the risk of bullying and report incidents, which students understand and can easily access. For example, a yellow card system (like in football) is in operation to report any incidents. Various tariffs are imposed, for example, three yellow cards in one week may result in contact being made with a student's parents or carers. Risk assessments are in place where students are identified as being at risk of

bullying or engage in bullying behaviour. All incidents are dealt with promptly and appropriately. Students are encouraged to complete surveys regarding bullying which are used to help identify areas of risk and any patterns that may emerge.

There are clear procedures to follow in the event of a student going missing. However, this is a very rare occurrence.

The management of behaviour is excellent and students make real progress during their time at school. This is due to the dedication of a highly skilled and well-trained staff team who provide consistent support to students. The emphasis is on recognising and rewarding positive behaviour and achievements. The staff team are constantly looking at ways to improve the management of behaviour including implementing different monitoring systems to look at triggers and how behaviours change. Students' progress is recognised and appreciated by parents and carers. Students also recognise and are very proud of the progress they make which increases their self-confidence. Physical intervention is very rarely used in the residential unit which is testament to the skills of the staff team and the positive relationships they have built with students. The use of physical interventions during the school day has continued to reduce substantially. This can, in part, be attributed to the relatively new Emotional Support Unit which is staffed during education time and students can self-refer to the unit. This facility allows students who are experiencing difficulties to have time on their own to reflect and talk to staff about their difficulties. This is an invaluable resource where students have benefited greatly. Exceptional and innovative monitoring systems help the senior leadership team know that behaviour is being managed appropriately and safely and therefore students are protected from the risk of harm.

The systematic management of health and safety helps to promote students' well-being and protect them from the risk of harm. The provision of a range of health and safety training for staff, the implementation of effective policies and procedures, regular servicing and maintenance of equipment, detailed risk assessments, which are regularly reviewed, and robust and effective monitoring systems ensure the environment is safe and secure for students and staff. There is a designated staff member to oversee the management of health and safety. However, this is another area where the whole school staff team work closely together and share responsibility to ensure a safe and secure environment for students and staff. Fire safety procedures are good and include regular testing of the fire alarm systems and fire drills being held as required. Students know what to do when the fire alarm goes off.

Safe and effective recruitment practices and the vetting of visitors help to protect students from the risk of harm and abuse. Appropriate checks are carried out including enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks, proof of identity and obtaining appropriate references. Students are also encouraged to be involved in the recruitment of staff as much as possible, which gives students a voice and makes them feel valued. This may include students taking applicants on a guided tour or being part of the interview panel.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Students receive an excellent level of care and education based on their individual needs. Staff firmly believe that students should be given every opportunity and different experiences to reach their full potential and be able to contribute to society. Staff recognise the importance of, and are committed to, working in partnership with students, their families and carers and other agencies which complement their educational needs. Staff provide support to parents and carers which helps to ensure children have consistent guidance and boundaries within the school and home environment. Parents and carers really appreciate the support they receive from the school. Comments received from parents and carers were full of praise for all staff at the school and commented on the progress their children have made. For example, one carer said they were 'over the moon' with the progress made by their child since being at the school.

Staff across all disciplines within the school work closely together creating a seamless and innovative service which helps students thrive and make real progress during their time in school and the residential unit. Good communication exists between residential and education staff. Residential staff know the educational targets set for each student and also work two days in school which gives all staff a greater understanding of students' holistic needs.

Staff are dedicated to providing students with every opportunity possible to enjoy a wide range of activities and have different experiences. Staff across all disciplines go way beyond what is expected of them by providing activities at weekends for students, and for students and their families at weekends and during school holidays. Students are provided with an immense range of activities which they thoroughly enjoy during their time in the residential unit. Students are encouraged and supported to try new activities which helps to increase their confidence and skills. Students and their families really appreciate the experiences and the opportunities they are given. Appropriate risk assessments are in place and are reviewed when necessary.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Staff work hard to empower students and enable them to make meaningful, positive contributions to their lives including in the running of the school and residential unit. This helps students to build up their skills, confidence and self-esteem. There is a range of forums where students contribute to the development of the school and residential unit. These include the school council, student surveys and weekly residential meetings. Three students who use the residential unit meet with a member of staff to look at ways of improving the provision and providing different experiences. As a result, students feel listened to. Where suggestions are made by students and these are not acted upon, students are given explanations for this.



Placements, including access to the residential provision at the school, are decided by the area resource panel which comprises a multidisciplinary team, and is based on a holistic assessment of need. The school works closely with the child, their parents and carers and other relevant professionals to ensure the admission process and leaving the school are positive experiences for students.

Care records are of a good standard and fully inform staff about the student's needs and how to meet them. Each student has a detailed care plan and other relevant care records such as behaviour plans and risk assessments. These records are reviewed as and when needed. Records are not always signed and dated by the author, which has the potential to hinder the monitoring and review process. The care planning process is currently being reviewed to look at ways to improve plans and how to involve students in a more meaningful way.

Students stay in residential for one or two nights a week but they are still able to contact their parents and carers if they wish. Contact between staff and parents and carers is excellent. Comments received from parents and carers show how much they appreciate the contact and support from staff. For example, comments include: 'staff have always got time to talk to you, advise you and get something done'; 'they tell me everything'; and 'they send a written report every week'. Support for students and their families has recently been further enhanced by the commissioning of a family link worker to work with students, the school and their families. The family link worker has a clear remit to provide both practical and emotional support to families, act as an independent advocate, as well as working in partnership with the school. The worker attends weekly staff meetings and also meets with the headteacher at least weekly to discuss any issues that may be affecting students' well-being. Students, parents and carers have already benefited from the input by the family link worker and comments received expressed their gratitude.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

Students are very well supported during their transition period which helps them prepare for adulthood. A transitions worker has been appointed within the school since the last inspection and students have benefited immensely. The staff member works closely with students getting ready to leave school, giving practical as well as emotional support. Students are given support with accessing and maintaining placements in local colleges and preparation for employment. This support includes completing application forms, preparation for interviews and transport training. Students also engage in voluntary work which helps them make valuable contributions to society. In order to support students and maximise their life opportunities, the transitions worker works closely with social workers, students' families and other agencies. The transitions worker meets regularly with the headteacher to discuss progress and any concerns.

A new residential provision has opened since the last inspection which is more in line

with everyday living arrangements. The house is a detached house in the grounds of the school and has its own access and security measures. The house is decorated and furnished to a high standard and students really enjoy staying. Students benefit from being able to learn everyday living skills and become more independent in a more realistic environment. Students are able to help with making snacks, cleaning their rooms, and washing and drying of pots. Students learn skills such as gardening and enjoy being able to mow the lawns and develop a vegetable patch. Students are able to have more freedom as the house has its own back garden where although staff are always around, they are more able to supervise from a distance when appropriate. There is a domestic-style kitchen and two lounges which enable a choice of activities. Students share bedrooms with another student and where appropriate they are able to choose who they share with.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

Students and their families receive an outstanding level of care and education as a result of a highly motivated, resourceful and skilled staff team. The majority of staff employed have worked at the school for many years, many in varying roles and experiencing many changes in legislation, philosophies and practices during this time. The tenacity and enthusiasm of the whole staff team to constantly improve the quality of lives for students are testament to the exceptional commitment of the staff team. The senior leadership team is effective and dynamic, providing clear direction and support to all staff. All staff have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. They feel valued and listened to in an environment where shared ownership is expected and promoted.

Staff training and development are seen as important to ensure staff can meet the holistic needs of students. All care staff have the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. Staff receive training in child protection, health and safety including fire safety, and first aid. Furthermore, staff take on designated tasks to enable them to develop a wide range of skills.

The residential unit has its own Statement of Purpose which informs parents, carers, students and other professionals about the services provided and the aims and objectives of the unit. It accurately reflects practice within the unit. The students' residential handbook gives information about what to expect including routines, details of the residential staff team, information on keeping pupils safe including how to complain, and useful contact details, for example, independent help lines and Ofsted.

The residential unit has its own development plan which staff are clearly committed to implementing. Staff in the unit feel very well supported by the head of care and the senior leadership team. Staff receive regular supervision and feel listened to and valued. Staff present as positive role models and excellent relationships exist between students and staff. The commitment of the staff team ensures students really enjoy their stays in residential while at the same time learning different life

skills. Staffing levels ensure students receive individualised care and support in a safe and enjoyable manner.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Students receive care and education based on their individual identified needs and staff ensure they have access to services based on their needs. Students are provided with various opportunities to experience and learn about other people's differences in terms of race, religion, culture, sex, age and disabilities.

There is a comprehensive range of monitoring and quality assurance systems within the whole school which are effective and robust. All staff take personal, as well as shared, responsibility for monitoring standards and looking at ways to make improvements. This ensures students can grow and develop while at the same time having fun, in a safe and nurturing environment. The school's internal quality assurance systems are complemented by monthly visits undertaken by a representative from the local authority and reports from these visits are produced.

## **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 all records are signed and dated by the author. (NMS 18.3)