

# Cuckmere House School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Liz Daniels
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<b>Nominated person</b>	Karen Gaster
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	16/06/2011

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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**

This residential special school is for boys aged between five and 16 years who have an educational statement for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). The school is maintained by the local authority. It is part of a federation, which is a collaboration/formal partnership that includes one other residential BESD special school, a day BESD special school and a range of alternative provision provided by the local authority.

The school's residential provision is located in a separate building in a residential area of the town, approximately half a mile from the main school site. Up to 12 boys can stay overnight and they generally stay between one and three nights during the school week. There is an extended day provision for both primary and secondary pupils, enabling them to stay into the evening for activities and a meal before returning home.

### **Summary**

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

At this announced inspection all the key national minimum standards were assessed. This is an outstanding school in all areas.

Staff promote good health and ensure the pupils' health needs are well met. They are well trained and excellent processes are in place to keep pupils safe. The school has a homely boarding environment where learning is promoted; enabling pupils to develop and achieve to their full potential is a fundamental ethos across the school. A range of activities and time with staff provide opportunities for pupils to learn skills which will help them become more independent and prepare them for adulthood.

However, some logs do not include the required detail and some are not signed as evidence that they are scrutinised as required. Similarly, although communication and discussions among staff are excellent, recorded supervision sessions do not always occur six times a year.

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

A recommendation that the policy relating to pupils going missing should be updated was made following the last inspection. This has now been undertaken.

## **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Staff at this setting promote good health. There are many outdoor activities arranged for young people to enjoy, and learning about personal hygiene, good dental care and the value of a balanced diet is an integral part of their care.

Health needs are identified as part of the admission process when pupils stay for an extended day or are resident overnight. Each pupil is registered with a General Practitioner near to their home and staff work closely with families to ensure the pupils receive regular dental and optical care. They also support them by enabling access to other professionals such as the nurse, the education psychologist or education psychiatrist, when required. None of the pupils who use the residential facility currently have any specific physical health needs but staff confirm that they detail any particular care in their care profile.

Many of the staff are trained in first aid and there are very good arrangements made to ensure first aid is administered safely. The required consents are completed whereby parents confirm their child can receive first aid and emergency treatment. Medication is well managed by staff who are appropriately trained. If any pupil feels unwell the partnership agreement for their stay includes an understanding that they should be at home; non-prescription medication is therefore not required.

The food provided for pupils within the residential provision is varied, wholesome and nutritious. Experienced staff who are trained in food preparation, are alert to individuals' particular likes, dislikes and particular dietary needs; they are enthusiastic about providing a choice of healthy meals and also ensure plenty of fruit and healthy snacks are available. Cultural dishes are also prepared as part of the pupils' learning about other countries, cultures and faiths. The pupils confirm there is plenty to eat and are complimentary about the menus. Equally, they are confident that they are listened to and that staff consider their feedback about food, incorporating their views into the menu. Mealtimes are happy, sociable occasions when the staff and pupils eat together. The care staff also spend time within the school and share meals with them there too.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Staff respect each pupil's privacy and demonstrate a clear understanding about maintaining confidentiality. Pupils can make telephone calls in private when they stay after school, either by using their own mobile or using the residential telephone. The pupils stay for one or two nights and all have their own rooms. They are clear that they do not go into each other's bedroom and that staff knock before entering. Although most of the pupils are closely supervised, they confirm that they do not lack privacy. Similarly, records and documentation relating to the pupils are stored safely and locked appropriately.

Staff recognise that each pupil has the right to complain and that their concerns must be taken seriously, investigated and acted upon. The complaints process is well publicised and the advice and information booklet which is readily available for pupils in the residential facility, clearly outlines who they can talk to or how to complain if they have any worries. Pupils confirm they can talk with staff and raise concerns. Equally, records demonstrate that staff capture anxieties the pupils experience and follow them up; they also confirm that any queries families raise are discussed and investigated. Similarly, parents believe they can speak easily with staff and discuss any concerns. As a result of this excellent communication, there have been no formal written complaints made; however, discussions with staff confirm that they know the procedure for managing a formal complaint, to reach a satisfactory outcome.

The staff are alert to the possibility of abuse and recognise their role in safeguarding the pupils in their care. Child protection training has been included in the school's in-service training in October 2010, for all staff; child protection is also included in each new staff member's induction. The special educational needs coordinator is suitably trained as the designated named person for child protection, through whom any allegations of abuse or concerns are coordinated. She is confident to discuss any queries with the local safeguarding team and has the local safeguarding children procedures available for reference. Two other staff have also had further training to take the lead in her absence. Each of the school governors has a specific area of responsibility; the person who takes a lead with safeguarding talks with staff about their understanding of the procedures in place to protect pupils, when visiting the school. Staff confirm that they recognise and know how to respond to safeguarding concerns.

There is a policy and guidance for staff to follow with regards to bullying. It is not tolerated and pupils are confident that staff will intervene. Staff are aware of group dynamics, as well as which triggers can lead to behaviour which may cause distress or conflict between pupils. Equally, bullying is discussed openly with pupils and this, with close staff supervision and support, is resulting in a low incidence. Similarly, those at risk of becoming absent without permission are identified and excellent strategies are resulting in very few instances. There is regular communication with the local police liaison officer about any behaviour patterns or criminal interest the pupils show whereby in the event, absence is well managed to protect pupils.

Behaviour is very well managed. A strong ethos of reward runs across the school and the residential provision, but pupils are clear of the consequences of disruptive or inappropriate behaviour. Staff use the required bound books to record any physical interventions and sanctions, although these are minimal. However, the entries do not always include all the required information. Staff are trained in behaviour management and believe firmly that most situations can be resolved through de-escalation techniques. As a result, pupils believe sanctions are fair and records confirm that physical intervention is only used as a last resort, when there is a risk of harm to individuals.

Excellent steps are taken to ensure the pupils, staff and visitors are kept safe. Risk

assessments are updated as hazards are identified and they are regularly reviewed. Appropriate contracts are in place and overall, good measures are undertaken for fire safety. All staff are trained in fire awareness and fire drills are held each term; in addition, an activated fire alarm last winter resulted in a night-time evacuation which was done well. To ensure fire arrangements are fully robust and to fully test the effectiveness of the night fire plan, staff plan to create 'mock scenarios' that simulate the night staffing arrangements and environment.

Visitors to the setting are very well vetted and contractors involved with the service are carefully monitored. Visitors' books are completed both at the school and at the residential provision to reduce the risk of unauthorised public access to pupils. Thorough recruitment processes are also undertaken. All the necessary information is received prior to employment and the required checks are made. All staff who are involved with the residential provision then undertake induction training and are well supervised until deemed confident in their role as carer for the pupils.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Staff enable pupils to absorb learning which is appropriate to their individual need; they also help them develop their life and social skills. For those pupils who enjoy overnight stays within the residential provision, staff support them with their daily routines enabling them to attend education. The care staff assist in the classroom as well as within boarding, enabling close liaison throughout the school staff team. The school is alive with visual displays, models and artefacts, all demonstrating imaginative academic, social and cultural learning opportunities for pupils. Pupils gain points during the school day and similarly have targets when joining in the extended day, or staying overnight. They are enthusiastic about the rewards they can earn and regard their achievements as important; equally, staff believe the pupils benefit from a cohesive and consistent approach that reinforces positive behaviour. Parents are equally positive about the progress their child makes. One commented: 'It's brilliant - a first class school. Since being here our lives have been transformed. In his previous primary school placements my son used to say "I don't feel safe". Now he says "I feel safe now Mum".'

A real strength of the school is that each pupil is clearly known and treated as an individual. Many present with difficulties in socialising and being part of a group; staff were observed to be kind and caring while being firm with the boundaries they expect pupils to adhere to. They are qualified staff and skilled to engage with pupils at the level of their individual needs and to support them throughout the 24-hour period. There is separation between the school day and time spent in the residential provision, but the individual support each pupil receives remains constant.

Staff offer a wide range of activities which include trips out as well as time in the house. However, pupils also benefit from time when they can choose sedentary activities or be in their rooms; board games which they and the staff all join in with are very popular. Photographs of all that they do are included in each pupil's

achievement folder as a reminder for them of how they have developed. Similarly, DVDs of school visits, activities and residential trips are made so parents can also enjoy the pupils' positive experiences. When asked what they thought of the residential provision, the pupils responded, 'amazing', 'great', 'astonishing' and 'outstanding'. Equally parents describe the service as, 'a fantastic facility' and comment that, 'all the staff are polite but friendly - keep up the good work'.

The school has identified an independent person who will visit or be available for the pupils to contact outside the setting. However, each pupil spoken with or who completed the questionnaire could readily name staff or family members with whom they can discuss any issues they may have.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The voice of young people is evident at this setting. School councils for the primary and secondary years are the main forums which they use to express their views. Both meet regularly and each include pupils who spend time in the residential provision. Each pupil involved strongly believes their views are considered important and that they are listened to. Equally those who are not part of the councils know who they can go to with any ideas they may have and they are confident their views are contributed. Changes introduced as a result of pupils' ideas can be seen across the setting and include additional water fountains in school, benches by the fields to watch football, fair trade in the tuck shop with profits being used to sponsor a young person overseas, taking a lead in the arrangements for an autumn fair, and the development of an eco garden.

For each pupil who attends the school, there is a statement of special educational need; they are fully assessed before being introduced into the school. In Year 5 there is the opportunity for primary pupils to have a 'taster' of an extended day; for this, they spend time with the care staff in the residential provision, before deciding whether it would be a suitable option for them in Year 6. Once they join Year 7, there is the option for some pupils to be residential during part of the week, if it is felt it would benefit them. Individual welfare plans ensure that they are cared for in accordance with their particular needs. There is a wealth of information available for them and their parents about the residential provision; they then also sign a 'partnership agreement' that clearly explains the expectations when they stay. The targets which are set are then agreed with parents and these then provide the focus of care. Records, feedback from parents and reviews clearly confirm that the good work being done with pupils is enabling them to progress extremely well.

Pupils stay at the school for one or two nights each week. When they board, they are strongly supported to maintain contact with their families by using their own mobile phones or the phone within the house. All staff work closely with families; the care staff telephone at least weekly and the special educational needs coordinator also keeps in regular contact with them. This ensures that by being aware of the needs of each family, staff are better able to care for pupils.



## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

The pupils who stay in the residential provision can wear their own clothes outside school time. As they each have their own bedroom, their own toiletries and some possessions can be kept there if they prefer. Overall, those pupils spoken with feel their possessions are safe. Staff were observed assisting them with understanding the value of money and encouraging them to keep their possessions safe when they go out.

The daily life of the school provides many opportunities for pupils to develop the knowledge and skills they are likely to need for their future living. It is underpinned by the school's applied learning programme; this enables each pupil to work towards bespoke credit certificates or nationally recognised accreditation by providing evidence of their achievements. Once in Year 12, the pupil's independence assessment enables all staff to focus on the areas where they particularly need support. Excellent liaison between the school and local authority ensures that pupils have a planned and structured transition into their next placement such as college or an apprenticeship.

The standard of accommodation for pupils is superb. Considerable effort has gone into ensuring that the environment is pleasant and homely, with sufficient space and facilities to meet each pupil's needs. Good quality furnishings enable them to be comfortable and the communal areas provide sufficient space for them to enjoy a range of activities and pastimes. The bedrooms are suitably furnished and the pupils can personalise them as they wish. The house is situated in a large garden which also provides plenty of space for games and recreation. A maintenance programme for the residential accommodation forms part of the school's annual development plan.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

Clear, well-presented information about the school is provided to parents, staff and pupils. This accurately describes what the school sets out to do and includes details of the residential service provided. Pupils have their own guide to the residential provision which is available in a format which they can easily understand. The school also has its own website as well as a webpage as part of the local authority website, where there is further information about the school.

An experienced and qualified staff team cares for the pupils when they spend time in the residential provision. Currently the school provides overnight stays for five senior pupils, while four senior and seven primary pupils benefit from staying for an extended day. Rotas are planned to promote continuity of staffing each week and good staffing levels allow pupils to be very well supervised, supported and protected.

Excellent arrangements for staff training include specific training to meet the individual needs of the pupils; this helps ensure that they are provided with safe care by knowledgeable staff. There has not been a need to recruit care staff recently as there have not been vacancies. However, several teaching assistants have joined in with the extended day to provide additional support. Care staff confirm they ensure any new staff undertake an induction to focus on the key areas of care provision and that they work under supervision, although the details of this are not always recorded. Similarly, as the care team is small and well established, communication between them and with school colleagues is excellent. They all make time for informal supervision and reflection on practice with the head of care and each other; however, recorded sessions of one-to-one supervision from a senior member of staff do not always take place each half term. Staff demonstrate that morale within the care team is extremely good and they confirm they feel that excellent support and guidance are provided.

There is strong organisation and management of the school as well as clear lines of accountability. Experienced senior staff provide sound and committed leadership. The residential provision and the welfare of pupils who stay, are seen as an integral part of the school. All aspects of the care provision are frequently reviewed by the head of care; this is reflected in the minutes of meetings. However, scrutiny of the required logs and processes cannot be fully evidenced. There is an enthusiastic and motivated body of governors; each has an area of specific responsibility and parent governors have also been welcomed. The head of care submits a summary of the residential provision to the governing body each term and a governor also undertakes termly monitoring visits. A report is produced although it does not always fully evidence that the visits include all the required checks. However, the governors are aware that this is a developing area and are committed to their role in identifying strengths as well as guiding staff in areas for development.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. There is a strong focus in the school of treating all pupils as individuals; their specific needs are always taken into consideration and are never seen as a barrier. The school provides opportunities for pupils to learn about differences in culture, beliefs and background; it also promotes the view that differences are to be enjoyed and celebrated.

## **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 entries in the logs of physical intervention and sanctions include the details required (NMS 10.9, 10.14)
- ensure all staff receive at least one and a half hours one-to-one supervision from a senior member of staff each half term and that records are kept following those meetings (NMS 30.2, 30.3)

- ensure that the headteacher or senior members of staff monitor and sign the records as noted, to identify any patterns or issues requiring action. (NMS 32.2)