

# Coln House

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Andrew Hewston

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<b>Email</b>	
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr C Clarke

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## **Purpose and scope of the inspection**

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.<sup>1,2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

This residential special school caters for 48 boys and girls aged nine to 16 years old. The boarding accommodation is divided into five separate house areas providing small group living. A small cottage that was previously available for independence training is now being used to introduce new residents to the school. All pupils have emotional, behavioural, social and associated learning difficulties.

The school is maintained by the local authority and is situated on the edge of a market town. The residential provision was last inspected in March 2010.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools).

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>outstanding</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	good
Residential pupils' safety	outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	outstanding

## Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- Coln House strongly promotes the development of residential pupils and allows them to progress with relation to their educational and social needs.
- Positive relationships are a key factor in residential pupils' development at the school with staff providing strong and consistent role models. Residential pupils state that staff 'really care for you.'
- Care planning is highly individualised and responds to residential pupils' needs well to support their development.
- Residential pupils are protected by robust safeguarding procedures that are known by well trained staff.
- Residential pupils enjoy an excellent range of activities that both support and challenge them. Residential pupils are actively encouraged to become involved with events within the local community and supporting individuals with the locality.
- The residential provision is well managed and organised to meet the needs of the residential pupils first and foremost.
- Although there are some development areas regarding the national minimum standards these do not have a direct impact on the care of the residential pupils and in most cases are already known by the school and are being addressed.

## **Outcomes for residential pupils**

Residential pupils achieve outstanding outcomes. There are good quality relationships with the adults that work with them on a daily basis. Residential pupils are seen to be relaxed and state that they feel safe within the school environment. Residential pupils appreciate their own development with regard to the residential experience, stating that they 'have calmed down a lot since being at the school' and that they now 'get on better at home.'

Residential pupils are involved in a wide range of experiences at the school. These do not just relate to activities, but also to additional responsibilities that involve them in the community and developing a sense of a 'place within society'. Such experiences also develop residential pupils' sense of self confidence and responsibility. Residential pupils are involved in making decisions about their lives and the development of the school within school forums and the review process. This helps to develop their self esteem and their ability to affect change within their lives and the school.

Residential pupils' behaviour is a primary focus at the school and this is responded to effectively. They develop social skills through living within a well structured residential experience, where staff are able to respond to differing needs and promote ways that children can respect each others differences.

The school supports transition arrangements for moving residential pupils into adult life and prepares them for the challenges that they will have to overcome after leaving.

## **Quality of residential provision and care**

Residential pupils enjoy good quality care and provision. Arrangements to support residential pupils throughout their residential experience are thorough, well thought through and effective in developing their academic and personal progress. There are effective links between the school and residential provisions that ensure all staff work closely to support the differing aspects of residential pupils' school lives. Residential pupils are supported by differing adults, both within the school and externally through independent visitors, although the arrangements for these visitors need some additional formalising.

Residential pupils' care is directed by differing plans that give staff a clear awareness of how to work best with them. The plans include all necessary information relating to their placement at the school. These are regularly reviewed and show both short and longer term targets that residential pupils are working on to improve aspects of their life at the school. Residential pupils are able to discuss their targets and how these are developed through consultation with key workers, allowing residential pupils to have a say in the care that they are receiving and the way that this could be achieved. Sections of the plans are stored within differing areas, being computer and

paper based and do not give a clear awareness of how the school is caring for the young person within a single accessible format.

Health plans are in place and ensure that information relating to residential pupils' health needs are available to all those who need this. The school no longer has a full time nurse, but an effective and trained staff team supplement the local doctor and the visiting nurse to respond to medical issues raised by the residential pupils. The school has developed its therapeutic team and this links closely with the 'hub' support team to promote the development of residential pupils and respond at times of crisis or conflict within the school day. Meals at the school further support the health needs of residential pupils, with menus being responsive to both their likes and dislikes as well as being nutritional.

Accommodation is provided within a range of residential areas across the school site and meets the differing needs of the residential pupils well. Residential pupils are proud of their home areas and the personalisation of bedrooms and lounges is promoted by the staff team to create pleasant, comfortable and homely living spaces. Repairs and redecoration are completed across the site on a rolling basis.

Residential pupils state that the activities are the 'best bit about living at the school.' Recordings of activities are effectively analysed and show how they relate to individualised needs of residential pupils. There is an excellent mixture of activities where residential pupils can choose to be involved in adventurous and active evening sessions as well as more relaxed and quiet pursuits.

## **Residential pupils' safety**

The safety and well being of residential pupils is outstanding throughout their residential experience. All necessary health and safety checks are completed on a regular basis to support the safety of both residential pupils and staff. Full and thorough recruitment checks are completed on all staff within the school prior to them working with residential pupils. Additional safeguarding checks are also in place for those who also live on the school site.

Excellent arrangements are in place to safeguard residential pupils at all times. The head of care is able to show effective leadership and knowledge in responding to child protection concerns and thorough recordings are in place to show how concerns are followed through and reported to relevant authorities when necessary. All staff are fully trained in how to recognise and report concerns to support residential pupils' safety.

The whole school staff team respond consistently to some challenging behaviours from residential pupils. The behaviour management system appears complex with differing scoring systems and reward structures. Residential pupils are however well aware of these systems and can accurately describe what they need to do to achieve within the school and how specific targets are in place to help them improve their

behaviours. When restraints are used these are completed by trained staff and fully recorded to ensure residential pupils' safety. Some sanctions are in place including restricted leisure time and early beds. Although these are recorded, there needs to be a clearer system in place to ensure these are recorded on a similar basis to restraints.

Robust arrangements are in place to respond to bullying behaviours. Residential pupils state that sometimes bullying does happen while they are at the school, but they are also able to discuss how staff deal with this and talk to both the bully and those who have been bullied.

A good range of risk assessments are completed with relation to both geographical areas around the school site and activities that are completed both onsite and externally. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed by designated staff members.

## **Leadership and management of the residential provision**

Residential pupils benefit from outstanding leadership and management. The residential provision is intrinsically linked to the school and thoroughly valued by the whole staff team. Residence is effectively managed by a strong team and there are clear lines of accountability and responsibility. The whole residential staff team are aware of their differing roles and how these relate to the care of residential pupils.

The large change in the staff team since the last inspection has been well managed and has not affected the continuity of the care being provided. All new staff are involved in a well organised induction to the school and developing key skills to allow them to work with the residential pupils at the highest standard. More experienced staff are able to discuss how they have supported others in developing a highly motivated and knowledgeable staff team. Staff are further supported through regular supervision. There are sufficient staff on duty at all times to meet the needs of the residential pupils.

A good range of policies are in place and these are reviewed on a regular basis. Two of these need some development, relating to complaints and residential pupils that absent themselves without authority to bring them fully in line with the expectations of the standards.

Staff use a range of communication strategies to gain the views of residential pupils and parents to ensure that everyone is working together to promote the best outcomes for residential pupils. Forums for meeting with residential pupils include a school council and key worker sessions. While there are some good recordings of these forums, they need to be further used to show how residential pupils are developing their responsibilities towards their own development. A new computer system is being rolled out to enhance recordings of residential pupils' involvement in the school.

The previous inspection highlighted three areas in need of development to improve care practices. All of these have been responded to; more robust recruitment arrangements are in place, reviewing of the school fire risk assessment and additional specialist services being put in place to further support residential pupils within the school.

## **National minimum standards**

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

## **What should the school do to improve further?**

- ensure arrangements for an independent visitor are formalised and their role is clear (NMS 2.3)
- ensure the placement plan clearly states how staff will care for residential pupils and promote their welfare on a day to day basis (NMS 21.1)
- ensure records are kept of all sanctions used within the school in a clear reporting format (NMS 12.6)
- ensure the schools procedures are compatible with the Local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care Protocols (NMS 15.7)
- develop further the ability of residential pupils to have their views known and recorded regarding the running of the school. (NMS 17.1)



**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



05/12/2011

Dear residential pupils

### **Inspection of Coln House**

As you are aware the school was recently inspected. I am pleased to say that the school was assessed as providing an outstanding level of care to residential pupils.

The care staff work well with all residential pupils and there have been some developments since the last inspection, including the new hub area. This is a good area that will hopefully support you in school.

All of you have targets and plans. It is good that you are all aware of the areas that you need to work on to achieve within school but some of the placement plans need development so that staff are clear about how to work with different residential pupils. You are aware of how you need to behave within school but sometimes things go wrong and you need to have a sanction. The sanctions that are used within school are fair, but need to be properly recorded by the staff.

You are helped to be safe within school by lots of checks being completed on all staff that work at the school. It is good that you are also able to keep healthy through good meals and fun activities.

All of the staff that work with you are enthusiastic and have completed training in caring for you. This is good and they help you to make the most out of staying at the school.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Hewston