

Shenstone Lodge School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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Inspector Angela Hunt

School address Shenstone Lodge School, Birmingham Road, Shenstone
Wood End, Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS14 0LB

Telephone number 01543 480369
Email headteacher@shenstonelodge.sandwell.sch.uk
Headteacher Mr S Butt

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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.^{1,2}

Information about the school

Shenstone Lodge School is a maintained residential special school catering for boys and girls with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties and children who display behaviour associated with the Autistic Spectrum. It offers education for pupils aged 5 to 11 years. The residential accommodation presently caters for boys only. Currently there are 26 pupils on roll, of which 8 are boarders. Boarding is predominately offered four nights a week. There is a key stage 3 day transition unit which was established in September 2010.

The residential provision is situated in a large country house and is spread over three floors set in a four and a half acre site. The building has been extended in the past to provide staff rooms, offices, a medical room and resource areas. The purpose built school is detached from the residential facilities.

In April 2010 the school expanded to include secondary provision, at Brades Lodge, on a new site 12 miles away from Shenstone Lodge. The two sites function independently. The residential provision at Shenstone Lodge was last inspected as an integrated inspection on 27 January 2011.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for residential pupils	outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	good
Residential pupils' safety	outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	satisfactory

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of Shenstone Lodge School is good. There are some outstanding features which mean that the quality of residential provision and care has made a positive impact on the outcomes for pupils.
- The residential provision is well led and is organised to meet pupils' needs. Residential pupils receive high levels of support and guidance from an enthusiastic and committed staff team. This is helped by the purposeful communication between staff and parents/carers.
- The highly effective relationships between pupils and the staff who care for them promote pupils' self esteem. The residential provision is an extremely welcoming, well maintained and nurturing environment in which pupils develop their social skills and are able to celebrate achievements and success.
- The school's arrangements for child protection are secure and the systems for recruitment and vetting are robust. The high priority given to ensuring staff receive ongoing training in child protection, the link between the school and children's services, and the electronic recording system for safeguarding matters mean that students' safety and well-being is paramount. Pupils feel safe and well cared for.
- The school ensures that pupils' health needs are met exceptionally well and a wide range of activities which the pupils enjoy promote healthy lifestyles. The nutritious and varied diet provided to pupils supports their health and well-being.
- Behaviour is managed to good effect and the systems in place to promote good behaviour assist pupils to progress and prepare them for the next stage of their

education.

- There is a commitment to promote equality and diversity and pupils gain greatly from the diverse backgrounds of both their peers and the staff team.
- While the required records are kept, the shortfall of not having an established system for monitoring record-keeping systems and policies mean that work to ensure follow-up action and to support improvement in this area is not actively promoted.
- While there are some minor weaknesses against parts of the national minimum standards, these do not weaken the overall good quality of care and provision and have minimal impact on outcomes for pupils.

Outcomes for residential pupils

The outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Pupils receive excellent guidance and support from a highly dedicated team of pastoral care staff. Staff are extremely committed and driven to improve outcomes for the pupils in their care.

Communication between staff across the school and the residential provision is impressive. Well-planned rotas combined with a high level of staff retention ensure pupils are afforded continuity of care. This enables residential pupils to develop highly successful, secure and purposeful relationships with staff.

The nurturing environment means that residential pupils feel extremely safe and happy. Staff actively encourage pupils to engage in how the residential element of the school is organised, through plentiful interaction and by listening and responding to any views and suggestions pupils make. The well-established behaviour management strategies including the highly effective system of promoting and rewarding success help to develop pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the reward system and give examples of how this helped in modifying their behaviour.

The emphasis given at mealtimes in encouraging impeccable table manners, the delegation of appropriate responsibilities to promote pupils self-help skills, and the good role models provided by staff through sitting and eating with the children assist pupils in developing valuable personal and social skills. This in turn helps to promote independence and prepare pupils for transition to the next stage of education.

Residential pupils thoroughly enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer. The grounds and range of activities available to pupils provide simulating and exciting opportunities. The emphasis on encouraging physical activity and the robust health care arrangements in place promote the physical, emotional and psychological health and well-being of residential pupils.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the residential provision is good. An established parenting programme and effective communication links between staff and parents/carers make a positive difference to many parents, with partnership working at the heart of the provision. A welcoming, caring ethos together with good working relationships and communication across academic and pastoral care staff support pupils' academic development as well as their personal development. The availability of informal visits to the school, home visits as part of the referral and admission procedure, and a 'child-friendly' induction booklet provide pupils with a successful induction to a residential placement. Pupils stay in touch with families by telephone and parents are able to visit and are welcomed in joining pupils at mealtimes.

While the care plans are pupil focused, they are limited in detail and do not fully replicate the uniqueness of the pupil or of the targets for individuals describing how children's care needs will be met on a daily basis. The school are accepting of this finding and plans are in place to develop and implement a more comprehensive model of care planning. Despite some weaknesses remaining in the production of written placement plans, outcomes for residential pupils are of high quality.

The residential accommodation is clean, well maintained and welcoming. Some upgrade of bathrooms has taken place and further work is planned in this area. While there are a range of good quality communal areas throughout the boarding accommodation, including a sensory room, some areas are underused. In the delivery of art and play therapy, the same room is currently used for both therapies. The grounds are well equipped and provide pupils with great opportunities for outside play. Pigs and sheep provide an additional dimension to the outside environment which pupils enjoy. The recently established Forest School activities which take place on site offer pupils the opportunity to achieve, and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in an on-site woodland environment.

The health care arrangements are managed with care and precision. Robust procedures for the receipt, administration and recording of medicines are implemented in practice. Appropriately trained staff, ongoing health planning and constructive links with a designated health professional underpins the high emphasis the school places on health care. Detailed medical forms and consents are completed and updated indicating that the school is fully aware of pupils' current health needs and has relevant permissions to administer prescribed and non-prescribed medication, first aid and emergency treatment. This assists in promoting the health and well-being of pupils.

Pupils are provided with a good choice of nourishing meals which they enjoy. Individual dietary requirements are catered for and menus reflect favourite food preferences of the pupils. The dining area is pleasantly presented and mealtimes provide valuable opportunities for socialisation which pupils very much appreciate.

Mealtime routines ensure that pupils learn to respect one another, take turns and improve their social skills. Pupils' birthdays and achievements are creatively celebrated at mealtimes.

Residential pupils' safety

The school makes outstanding provision to safeguard pupils' welfare. There are robust and well established procedures in place for staff recruitment which ensure that pupils are well protected. A comprehensive check list on each personnel file provides a useful tracking system to make sure that the required checks are completed before a member of staff starts work at the school. Staff including the school's designated person who is the head of care together with the deputy head of care are trained in child protection to the required level. The school's child protection procedures successfully implemented by appropriately experienced designated staff, the effective links between the school's two social workers and with the local authority's children's services, and the programme of ongoing training in child protection ensure welfare is at the forefront of everyday practice. The high emphasis placed on working in partnership with parents and other professionals result in pupils feeling safe, well protected, valued and respected as individuals. There are highly effective referral systems in place to minimise risk and promote pupils' safety and well-being.

A well-embedded reward system operates, culminating weekly in pupils receiving awards for positive achievements, including taking responsibility and for consistency of good behaviour. Reward charts are used to monitor unacceptable behaviour where appropriate. Residential pupils confirm that they are treated fairly and indicate that they are clear about what the school expects in terms of their behaviour. Guidance on behaviour management strategies underpins the excellent practice. The school is effective in countering any bullying should it occur and operates a zero tolerance approach towards bullying. Written records are kept of major sanctions and of any physical interventions including the reasons for its use.

There are well established systems in place for health and safety matters. This includes ongoing safety checks, an up-to-date annual fire risk assessment, the regular servicing of fire safety equipment and a system of regular reporting to the school's premises and curriculum committee and governors on any relevant premises matters.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The leadership and management of the residential provision is satisfactory. The residential provision is managed effectively by the head of care. The deputy head of care who also has management responsibilities including deputising in the absence of the head of care, works as a full-time member of the care team. There are no management hours assigned to the deputy of care to undertake designated

management responsibilities such as the supervision of ancillary staff. However, the unified care staff team work extremely hard to provide appropriate supervision and care to residential pupils. This quality of care provided to pupils is enhanced by other visiting professionals, for example a senior educational psychologist, therapeutic support and a speech and language therapist. Regular and ongoing supervision of care staff now takes place in order to support them in their roles. Staff receive a good level of training to develop their professional skills, knowledge and understanding; continual professional development is actively encouraged by the school.

The school promotes diversity through resources and from staffing and children from varied backgrounds. Outcomes for pupils are extremely positive. However, monitoring and evaluation is not systematic and sufficiently robust. While the school maintains the records required by the national minimum standards and regulation, record keeping systems and policies are not routinely checked to ensure that they are up to date, relevant or to ensure that necessary follow-up action is taken where needed. Leadership and management is highly dependent on the management of boarding to make sure that the required systems and processes are being adhered to. In addition, the system whereby an independent visitor regularly visits the school does not act as a critical friend in identifying where future improvements and developments to the residential provision could be made. While there are excellent safeguarding arrangements in place, the report to governors on safeguarding lacks detail to enable the governing body to adequately monitor the welfare arrangements. More importantly, the information on safeguarding fails to reflect the good practice which takes place.

There is an appropriate complaints procedure for parents and carers and a clear system in place to deal with any concerns and worries. While there are effective lines of communication between staff and pupils, and other avenues pupils can choose to take if they have a complaint, the school does not have a written complaints procedure specifically for pupils. The school acknowledges this shortfall and plans to introduce a child-friendly form to capture feedback and any comments and concerns pupils may have.

National minimum standards

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.

- The records specified in Appendix 2 ('Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards') are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate. (NMS 13.3)
- The school produces a written placement plan, agreed as far as is practicable with the child, the child's parents/carers and any placing authority for the child, unless the information is held elsewhere such as in the child's statement of

special educational needs. The placement plan identifies the needs of that child that the school should meet and specifies how the school will care for the child and promote their welfare on a day to day basis. Where significant changes are made to the placement plan there is appropriate consultation. Where applicable the plan is consistent with the care plan of the placing authority for any child placed by a local authority. The placement plan is regularly reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect significant changes in the child's needs or progress in his or her development. Where feasible children in the school are aware of the content of their placement plans, and confirm that the school is providing care for them that is consistent with the plans. (NMS 21.1)

What should the school do to improve further?

- Review the arrangements to ensure that the school's governing body monitors the care and welfare provision more effectively.
- Conduct a review of the communal areas in the residential provision to promote more efficient use of all available areas.

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.



21/02/2012

Dear pupils

Inspection of Shenstone Lodge School

As you will know, Ofsted recently visited your school to see what it was like for those of you who stay at school after the school day has finished. I visited the residential part of your school and spoke to many of you and the staff who look after you. It was very nice to meet many of you and I really enjoyed my time at the school.

I had great fun at the birthday party and I loved watching the party games and joining in the game of 'pass-the-parcel'. I think that the support and help you receive from staff is excellent and helps you to feel safe and comfortable. I was really pleased to see Chip around so much and also your teachers. I think the time when the awards are given out is really exciting and I really enjoyed learning about your achievements.

It was lovely to see your brightly coloured bedrooms and to see the brilliant range of things you get involved in. I was particularly impressed by your politeness at mealtimes and your willingness to let me join you during the evening. I think that your boarding accommodation is good and it was nice to see all your outside areas, including the pigs and sheep.

You all said that you feel safe in the school and it was good to see the way staff look after your welfare. The staff help to make sure you are healthy and the meals you have are nutritious and tasty. I especially liked the party food.

I did however notice that the school were not doing enough to monitor the records kept by the staff who care for you and that written plans of your care were needed. This means that the school need to do some work on these area.

I really did enjoy meeting you and visiting the school. All the very best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely,

Angela Hunt