

Field Heath School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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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

Pield Heath School is a non-maintained day and residential special school for boys and girls between the ages of seven and 19 years who have complex needs, moderate to severe learning difficulties and associated communication problems. Residential accommodation is available from Monday to Thursday in addition to overnight respite care. Currently four students reside at the school and an additional 10 use the service for short breaks. Accommodation is provided in one house located on the school site. The school was founded by the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus of Mary and they remain the trustees. A convent and nursing home are also located in the grounds of the school in Uxbridge, Middlesex. The school was last inspected in January 2011.

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

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boardingschools.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is good. The provision has a highly effective impact on student's personal and social development, and achieves consistently outstanding outcomes for their health, well-being and safety.
- Each student is highly valued, exceptionally well cared for and supported to reach their full potential; consequently they are thriving in this school.
- There are many examples of excellence which are worth disseminating beyond this home. For example, the school is an inclusive and very caring community where acceptance and appreciation of differences are celebrated, resulting in very good relationships and a feeling of safety and security. The values of respecting, nurturing and understanding students as individuals are strong and consistent.
- Staff fully understand student's individual strengths and needs. They were observed interacting and providing support with the utmost care and consideration. There are consistent working practices which focus on enhancing students' quality of life.
- Robust arrangements continue to keep students safe. Staff recognise the diverse and vulnerable needs of students and are diligent in ensuring they are protected. Students communicate that they feel safe and secure in the school and this is supported by the excellent relationships they have with members of staff and each other.
- The residential provision is well organised and managed. The staff team are energetic and committed to achieving excellence in all areas of their practice.

Staff are provided with excellent training and development opportunities and the school is ensuring that it has a well-qualified workforce. There is a willingness to learn and acquire new skills in order to provide the best possible care for the students.

- All national minimum standards are met. However, there are minor weaknesses in leadership and management which have resulted in recommendations for further improvement. These areas do not detract from the overall quality of provision or outcomes for students. Areas for improvement relate to ensuring that agency staff receive regular formal supervision and that the school considers a shift leader role in the absence of the manager. Additionally, records in the residential provision do not comprehensively detail the knowledge staff have of student's individual needs or fully demonstrate the progress they are making as a result of boarding.
- Since the last inspection the school has made good progress against meeting aims and objectives of its internal development plan. Examples include developing the behaviour support programme further; this has resulted in an improved focus on de-escalation and more detailed records of incidents. Additionally progress has been made towards enhancing student's life skills by starting a more formal process of assessment and teaching in the residential accommodation.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential students are outstanding. Students gain enormously from their residential experience and the individualised support they receive. Their happiness, security and well-being is placed at the centre of all practice and consequently students and their families feel genuinely valued and cared for. Residential students make substantial progress in developing confidence, self-esteem and social skills which in turn contributes to their educational progress. Staff state that students arrive at school settled and well-prepared for learning after staying in the residential accommodation.

Residential students benefit greatly from exceptionally positive relationships with all staff, including senior managers. They provide positive role models and their consistent and caring approach forms the core basis for all work at the school.

Students are caring, thoughtful and extremely supportive of each other. Individual needs and differences are accepted and there is an overwhelming ethos of respect. Students display genuine delight in each other's achievements and rewards, and throughout the week there are many opportunities to celebrate these together.

Students are empowered to make a positive contribution to the community life of the school and beyond. Examples such as sponsoring children and fundraising for local and national charities have helped students to have a greater understanding of the

wider world. Students are environmentally aware and are active participants in keeping the school litter free, recycling and checking lights are turned off. Their views are valued and their contributions from house and council meetings help to influence how the school and residence are run.

Students enthusiastically enjoy a range of evening activities which contribute to their physical fitness, social skills, independence and emotional well-being. Students are active members of local community youth groups where they have made friends and enjoy peer group interactions.

The behaviour of residential students was very good throughout the inspection and it was a pleasure to spend time with students. Good behaviour is linked to the quality of the individual work the school undertakes with the students, the culture of consideration for others and the focus on positive reinforcement of good behaviours.

The health and well-being of a number of students has improved as a result of their residential experience, including health promotion and consistent daily routines. Students disseminate their health knowledge to others. Examples include supporting visitors to maintain good health by reminding them of personal hygiene, explaining the importance of using gym equipment regularly and suggesting they make healthy choices at mealtimes.

All students are particularly well prepared for life after school. They are consistently and centrally involved in transition planning; they develop life skills through the individual learning programme incorporating personal, social and independence development. Additionally, residential students enjoy the responsibilities involved with group living and are enthusiastic in taking on chores in the house. Examples include laying the table, helping to cook the evening meal and clearing away afterwards.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of residential provision and care is outstanding. Students benefit from a highly personalised approach to transition planning, both into the school and residence and when moving onto the next placement. Families and placing authorities speak positively about the success of this approach which includes personalised social story work, information booklets, individual transition plans, visits and participating in activities. Support plans are drawn-up in consultation with students and their families and are reviewed regularly. These well-planned arrangements mean that students and families are prepared emotionally and practically for their transition, resulting in confident and trusting relationships which help students feel safe and secure.

The staff team are experienced, dedicated and very child focused. The partnership-working between care, education, therapy, health, transition teams and families provide the students with excellent pastoral care. Staff have a very comprehensive understanding of students' individual needs and strengths and ensure that care

planning arrangements and support plans are personalised.

There is a consistent approach when engaging with students or advocating on their behalf and a focus on developing a positive self-image. Students are enabled to make informed choices particularly in relation to personal presentation, hobbies and leisure pursuits and personalising their bedrooms. This not only empowers young people but results in high levels of self-esteem and self-worth.

Students enjoy good health. A healthy lifestyle is promoted through lots of physical activities and a nutritious balanced diet. Students develop a very good understanding of health issues and safety by helping to choose, plan and prepare evening meals. Students are provided with food they like, that meets their individual dietary needs and thoroughly enjoy the mealtime experience. Meals are taken around the table and provide opportunities to enjoy a social occasion while developing choice-making skills, self-help, and independence.

Student's health is closely monitored and they are provided with excellent support when they are poorly or injured. Staff are well trained to enable the safe administration of medication, first aid treatment and management of specialist conditions. Families say they cannot speak more highly of the group workshops delivered by the therapy and nursing team which has helped them to better understand and support their child's individual needs.

There are high aspirations for students. The whole staff team provide an exceptional level of individualised support and realistic target setting which ensures students achieve and participate both at school and within the residence. Students have developed greater independence skills, improved their weight management, gained confidence at attending and participating in medical appointments and achieved recognised attainments for community work and life skills.

Students are able to engage in a wide range of stimulating and exciting activities both on site and away from the school. Staff see it as vital that students access activities in the community as this helps them to develop and extend their social networks as well as gain self-confidence.

The accommodation is pleasantly decorated, furnished and clean and provides a welcoming environment. Premises are secure, checked regularly and well maintained. A large communal sitting room and a dining room are situated on the ground floor; these are used in a variety of ways to support aspects of the evening activity programme. Students also have access to a range of outdoor recreational facilities including an outdoor gym, all-weather surface area and field to promote physical activity and social interaction.

Families and placing authorities speak highly of the school. Comments include: 'My daughters confidence has grown since she started boarding,' 'my son is gaining in self-confidence and independence,' 'the staff in the house and school are so well

placed in their jobs as they are so in tune with the young people,' and, 'it is common knowledge amongst professionals that this school is the best provision as it is an environment that looks to move young people forward'. Students give the school and residence a 'big smiley face' and a 'resounding cheer'.

Residential pupils' safety

The arrangements for ensuring student's welfare and safety is outstanding. Student safety and well-being is taken extremely seriously by staff that are very aware of their responsibilities. Effective policies, procedures and risk assessments promote and safeguard the welfare of all. These include robustly implemented recruitment procedures and the monitoring of visitors to the site.

Strong links with other professionals concerned with safeguarding children are well-established. All staff receive child protection training and regular updates appropriate to their role. Safeguarding policies and procedures are annually reviewed in consultation with the whole team to take account of any legislative changes. This ensures staff knowledge and practice remains current. An annual safeguarding report and self-assessment is compiled and shared with governors and trustees.

Bullying is not tolerated and is not identified as a problem in the school or residence. Students have been actively involved in the annual anti-bullying awareness sessions and consequently feel well-informed and safe. Details of appropriate help lines and external contact numbers are provided to students on notice boards and in the welcome guide. Additionally students meet regularly with the independent visitor and have access to a further independent listener.

The school supports students to develop appropriate behaviour as described in the well-embedded and effectively implemented value and mission statement. There is an overwhelming ethos of respect, care, courtesy and concern which is understood, and shared by all members of the school community. The promotion of positive behaviour is underpinned by de-escalation, effective behaviour support plans, clear boundaries and expectations, role modelling, reward and the regular recognition and celebration of achievements. The school is successful at engaging with students and consequently they display positive behaviour and genuine care for each other. Staff are well-trained in an approved behaviour intervention method. Physical interventions are used infrequently and only when absolutely necessary to ensure the safety of students.

Risk assessments, policies and procedures are in place to support the maintenance of a safe environment. Where issues are identified these are attended to promptly. Regular safety and servicing checks are undertaken and regular fire drills take place at different times. Students are familiar with fire evacuation procedures and are given regular reminders of health and safety matters affecting them.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The leadership and management of the residential provision are good. The residential provision is an integral part of the school with very clear aims which are communicated well to students, parents and placing authorities. These aims are effectively carried out in practice and ensure all students receive a positive experience of school and boarding. Staff are conscientious in their work and have a clear and positive view of the benefits of the residential provision to individual students.

There is a strong senior leadership team in place who strive to continually improve outcomes for students. The school demonstrates a commitment to continuous development through its continued high standards of care and additional accomplishments since the last inspection. The school has successfully achieved the Healthy Schools and Every Child Matters Standards award and has reviewed the behaviour support and life skills programmes. The senior leadership team is forward thinking and through evaluation of its own practice has identified strengths and areas for future development to ensure the sustainability of the service. All staff contribute to internal development planning and make sure there is a shared ownership regarding improving the school.

Staff are provided with good information in policies, procedures, and systems and these are implemented effectively. The care team demonstrate a good understanding of their role and expectations and take equal responsibility for ensuring the smooth running of the residence. In the absence of the care manager, senior leaders monitor the running of the residence and provide staff with advice and support; however, they do not directly lead the shift. This means that there is the potential for unclear direction and deployment of staff.

The staff team speak positively about the support they receive from each other, extended colleagues and managers. It is evident that staff morale is good and this positively benefits students. Supervision for all permanent staff is provided alongside regularly scheduled team meetings, handovers, and annual appraisals and enables staff to discuss key issues about the students and reflect on their work practice. Agency staff are supported to attend team meetings and training. However, they are not currently provided with regular supervision by the school.

Training and development opportunities for staff are extensive and wide ranging, equipping them with the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of the students and the purpose of the provision. There is a commitment, evident in practice, to developing staff and providing them with qualifications, good quality training and guidance. Staff make effective use of development opportunities and the impact of this is evident in the level of skill they exhibit and their expertise in directly supporting young people.

Residential records are in place and are suitably maintained and monitored. However,

they do not comprehensively reflect the knowledge staff have of student's individual needs and the progress they are making in the residence. Daily dairies do not fully record all achievements and the accomplishments students make towards their individual targets. Minutes of residential house meetings do not effectively evidence the action taken to address student's requests or comments.

Staff have established and maintained excellent relationships with families and placing authorities. Parents who participated in the inspection feeling very well supported by the school, welcomed and listened to by all staff. Families' views are sought through annual surveys and through regular family workshop meetings. A school newsletter is produced each term detailing the activities students have participated in, their achievements and key information about 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 that all residential records are comprehensive and detailed.
- Ensure that agency staff are provided with regular formal supervision.
- Consider the use of a shift leader in the absence of the care manager.

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.



27/02/2012

Dear students of St Joseph's house

Inspection of Pield Heath School

Thank you for welcoming me into St Joseph's and allowing me the opportunity to spend time with you.

I really enjoyed meeting you all and was incredibly impressed with how polite, caring and supportive of each other you are.

I found that you are making excellent progress with life skills and I really enjoyed the meals that you helped to make. I was pleased to see how responsible you all are at helping to lay the table, clear away and manage personal care.

I found that you behave well and the staff are proud of how mature you are becoming by caring for each other and encouraging each other to be kind and helpful. I think that the positive leaf tree, certificates and students of the day, week and term really help you to focus on positive behaviour. I was very impressed with how pleased you are when another student wins an award or an achievement - this is a very grown up approach.

I am pleased that you get along well with the staff and that you feel comfortable at sharing your thoughts with a number of different people.

I think you are good at keeping yourselves healthy. It was excellent to see you using the gym equipment and make healthy choices. You have excellent opportunities to make friends. So many of you enjoy going to youth club and joining in with activities.

The staff know you really well and make sure that all of your individual needs are met and promoted. I would like the staff to keep more detailed records about the progress you make when you stay and the things you get up to that help you to be more independent. I have also asked the school to consider a shift leader post for times when the manager may be absent and to ensure all agency staff are provided with formal supervision.

Good luck for the future and I hope you enjoy the rest of the term.

Yours sincerely

Paula Lahey

Yours sincerely,

Paula Lahey