

Skilts School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

Unique reference number for social care SC033753
Unique reference number for education 103617
Inspection dates 28/02/2012 to 01/03/2012
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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

Skilts is a maintained day residential special school for boys with emotional, social and behaviour difficulties and associated learning difficulties between the ages of 5 and 11 years. The school is operated by Birmingham City Council Children's Services.

There are 64 children on roll and currently 17 children use the overnight residential service at some time during each week. It is situated in the countryside just outside Redditch in Worcestershire, approximately five miles from the Birmingham boundary.

The residential provision was last inspected March 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 | satisfactory |
| Outcomes for residential pupils | good |
| Quality of residential provision and care | good |
| Residential pupils' safety | good |
| Leadership and management of the residential provision | satisfactory |

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is satisfactory. Residential pupils receive a good level of individualised care and make good progress during their time at the school. Equality and diversity is well promoted throughout the residential provision.
- Residential pupils benefit from excellent relationships with staff which help pupils make considerable progress in their social, emotional and educational development.
- Staff across all disciplines within the school work closely together creating a seamless service which helps pupils thrive and make real progress during their time in school and the residential houses.
- Residential pupils enjoy staying in the houses and are very happy with the care they receive. Achievement is highly celebrated which helps build up pupils' confidence and self-esteem.
- The provision of meals is very good and healthy living is actively promoted.
- Parents and carers are very happy and grateful for the care, support and education their children receive and the progress they make during their time at the school. They also appreciate the support they, as parents, carers and families receive from staff at the school.
- The standard of residential accommodation varies between the two houses. The standard of décor and furnishings in one house is good and very child focussed. These standards are not reflected in the second house.
- The management of pupils' behaviour is good and pupils make good progress in

changing poor behaviours and developing socially acceptable behaviours. This helps pupils become more accepted members of the wider community and, in some instances, children are able to return to mainstream schools.

- The management of health and safety is satisfactory due to a lack of a co-ordinated approach. Fire safety practices are not always implemented as required and shortfalls identified in the fire risk assessment carried out in March 2010 have not been addressed.
- Leadership and management of the residential provision is good. Pupils benefit from care and support from a dedicated and highly skilled staff team. Staff work tirelessly to improve the lives of pupils and to prepare them for the next stages of their lives as much as possible.
- There are a range of quality assurance and monitoring systems in the school which take place at different levels. However, the management monitoring systems including those undertaken by the governing body are not effective and robust in identifying shortfalls in practices. This is particularly evident in the failure to identify shortfalls in fire safety practices, which has potentially placed both children and staff at risk of harm.
- There are some shortfalls in meeting the national minimum standards but there is no evidence that these have impacted on the quality of care residential pupils receive.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential pupils are good. Pupils really benefit from their residential experiences which they fully enjoy and this can be attributed to a highly dedicated and skilled staff team. Residential pupils receive a good level of care based on their individual needs and identified risks. They feel safe in the residential houses and have excellent relationships with staff which further helps to protect them from the risk of harm including bullying.

Pupils benefit from an environment where staff have high hopes and aspirations for all pupils to reach their full potential. Residential pupils make good progress in changing their behaviours while at the same having lots of fun. Consequently, they are able to become accepted members of the wider community; improve relationships with their families and carers and, in some cases, transfer back into mainstream schools.

Residential pupils are provided with an excellent range of recreational and daily living opportunities which many of them would not have been able to access. Residential pupils really enjoy the activities provided and they learn and develop social skills including how to relate socially to others around them, how to share with others and how to develop positive and respectful relationships. The range of activities also helps pupils develop self-care skills, social skills, and increases their self-esteem, and

confidence. Residential pupils benefit from the recently opened 3 Peaks kitchen which they are able to use in small groups to choose and prepare their own meals and there are plans for them to invite family members for a meal.

Residential pupils are empowered to be able to make informed choices and decisions which takes into account their abilities and levels of understanding. They actively contribute to the running of the houses, the school and their futures through various forums and systems such as the School Council and surveys that the school distribute to children as part of their quality assurance systems.

Comments from parents and carers are very positive. One parent commented, 'Since starting Skilts, my son's behaviour has improved vastly. The residential side is brilliant, he can play safely.' Another parent commented, 'I feel really happy with the staff and how the school look after my son.' One social worker also said that, 'Skilts do a fantastic job.'

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the residential provision and care is good. The admissions and induction process for residential pupils is excellent and takes into account individual's needs. Pupils and their families and carers are able to make informed choices about the process of admission. Staff work very closely with parents, carers and other relevant professionals to ensure relevant information is obtained about individuals prior to admission. This process is further enhanced by the invaluable role of the school's parent support advisor who works tenaciously to provide valuable support to children and their parents and carers. Care plans, which pupils contribute to, and associated records, are of a good standard and are reviewed regularly. Residential pupils have clear individual targets to work towards which helps to increase their social and developmental skills. Residential pupils are actively supported to contact their parents/carers in the evening if they wish.

Residential pupils live with their parents and carers, who have overall responsibility for their child's health needs. However, staff are totally committed to promoting a healthy lifestyle ensuring the physical and emotional health needs of pupils are met during their stays in residential. This is achieved by working closely with parents and other relevant professionals and agencies. Pupils' health needs are met and further protected by the safe and effective implementation of medication procedures. Staff receive training in the administration of medication and are also provided with training for specific medical needs.

Pupils are accommodated in two adjoining houses. The standard of décor and furniture varies. In one house the standard of decoration is good and very child focused which children really benefit from. Some of the décor and furnishings in the other house look tired and not as child friendly. Although children only stay one or two nights a week in most instances, they are actively encouraged to personalise their bedrooms which reflect their individual interests and personalities.

The provision of meals and the promotion of healthy eating is excellent. The school has received the 'Gold award' for food hygiene. Pupils enjoy healthy meals which are varied, nutritional and based on likes, dislikes and specific dietary needs. Catering staff are fully aware of pupils' specific dietary needs. Residential pupils learn about healthy eating and staff take the time to give explanations to any questions raised. Meal times during the evenings are a relaxed occasion where pupils and staff interact well together. Pupils display good manners.

Residential pupils engage in a range of purposeful activities within school and the local community. Residential pupils have lots of fun, take regular exercise, as well as learn and build up their skills and self-confidence. Pupils also actively engage in activities which helps them develop an awareness of different cultures and celebrate different religious festivals. Staff go to great lengths to ensure all pupils have equal access to activities which often means the same activity or trip is repeated two or three times. For example, all residential pupils went out for a Chinese meal before Christmas. This involved staff taking different pupils out on three separate occasions. Appropriate risk assessments are in place and are reviewed when necessary. Residential pupils really benefit from a period of 'quiet time' at the end of the day where they usually sit together with staff and watch a programme or DVD chosen by one of the children. This helps pupils relax and settle for the evening.

Residential pupils' safety

The arrangements for ensuring residential pupils' welfare and safety are generally good. However, a lack of a co-ordinated approach to the management of health and safety has resulted in shortfalls in this area, particularly in fire safety practices. This potentially has placed both pupils and staff at risk of harm. A member of the senior management team has recently been designated to take on the role of health and safety officer to ensure a more co-ordinated approach. The school's monitoring systems by the senior management team and the governing body have failed to identify shortfalls identified by Inspectors on day two of this inspection. The fire risk assessment carried out in March 2010 has not been reviewed and the majority of actions made in this risk assessment have not been addressed. Furthermore, recommendations from a visit from the local Fire and Rescue service have not been addressed. Following discussions with the head teacher, on day three of the inspection he produced an action plan detailing how the shortfalls were being addressed and timescales for completion of the different tasks required. This action has helped to reduce the risk of harm to children and staff significantly.

Welfare is promoted and protected by a range of policies and procedures for child protection which staff fully understand and implement. All staff receive child protection training which is provided annually. Staffing levels and the excellent relationships which exist between residential pupils and staff make it easy for pupils to raise any concerns they may have. There is information on display all around the school which informs pupils what they should do if they have any concerns, feel or

are being bullied, or are unhappy. Pupils are further safeguarded as they have access to an independent visitor who visits the residential units regularly.

The management of behaviour is good and pupils make real progress during their time at school. The school's culture of respect for each other helps create a happy environment where pupils learn about difference and how their actions and behaviours may impact on others. There are clear policies and procedures relating to the management of behaviour including bullying, the use of physical intervention and sanctions which staff implement effectively. All staff receive training in behaviour management. The emphasis is on recognising and rewarding positive behaviour. Staff present as positive role models and work hard to ensure pupils understand the impact of their behaviour. Appropriate records are kept as required. Effective monitoring systems of incident report forms and other associated records help to ensure that behaviour is being managed appropriately and safely and therefore pupils are protected from the risk of harm. There is good statistical analysis of the use of physical restraint which helps to identify any patterns and triggers. This analysis has led to changes which has reduced levels of risk, trigger factors and ultimately reduced the number of incidents of physical restraint.

Pupils are protected from the risk of harm or abuse by comprehensive, robust policies, procedures and guidance for vetting staff, volunteers and visitors.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The leadership and management of the residential provision is satisfactory. However, the school's management monitoring systems are not effective in identifying shortfalls in some areas which could impact on the wellbeing of pupils. Residential pupils receive a good level of care and support which takes into account their age, gender, race, religion, culture and levels of abilities and disabilities. This is possible due to the commitment and dedication of the staff team. The majority of staff employed have worked at the school for many years and it is testament to their commitment that they remain a well-motivated staff team.

The school's prospectus and Statement of Purpose gives clear details to children, parents and carers and placing authorities about the services the school provides. Practice is in line with the Statement of Purpose.

The residential staff team, ably led by the very experienced Head of Care, constantly try to improve the life experiences and opportunities for pupils and prepare them, as much as possible, for their next stage of life. Staff feel very well supported by the Head of Care. Staff feel valued and listened to in an environment where shared ownership is expected and promoted. As a result, pupils are able to learn, develop, have fun and feel safe and secure.

Staffing levels meet the needs of the residential pupils. The flexibility of staff in the school ensures that agency staff are not used to cover staff absences. This ensures

children receive care from staff who know them which also helps to make them feel safe. New staff receive a thorough induction which helps to ensure staff are equipped to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. Staff receive regular supervision, and training is seen as an integral part of staff development. The majority of the staff team hold a relevant minimum level 3 qualification. An excellent initiative has been introduced as part of staff's annual appraisal and performance. Each staff member has been set targets which relate specifically to developing and improving the residential provision which will increase the experiences and opportunities of children. These include improving the décor and furnishings in one of the residential houses; reviewing the Statement of Purpose to ensure it is in an appropriate format for the children using the residential provision.

Staff are clear about what to do in the event of a child going missing although this is a rare occurrence. However, the school does not have a copy of the local Runaway and Missing from Home and care protocols and procedures.

There have been absences of key members of the senior management team since November 2011 including the Head of Care. This may account for some of the shortfalls identified during this inspection, in particular, in the monitoring of systems and practices. There are a number of quality assurance systems within the school and residential provision undertaken by members of the senior management team, the governing body and monitoring visits by independent visitors. However, shortfalls relating to fire safety have not been identified by any of these systems which call into question the effectiveness of the management monitoring systems. The visits undertaken by the independent visitor are not robust enough and do not always take place every half term as required. Additionally, these visits do not check all the required records or give opportunities for children and staff to meet with the visitors. Although there is no evidence that these shortfalls have impacted on the lives of the pupils, there is the potential to place pupils and staff at risk if shortfalls in procedures and practices are not identified.

National minimum standards

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

- There is clear leadership and management of the practice and development of residential and care provision in the school, and effective links are made between academic and residential staff. The school's governing body or proprietor has a system to monitor care and welfare provision in the school. (NMS 13.1)
- 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's procedures are compatible with the local Runaway and Missing from

Home and Care (RMFHC) protocols and procedures applicable to the area where the school is located. Where children placed out of authority go missing, the Head of Care follows the local RMFHC protocol and complies with and makes staff aware of any other processes required by the placing authority. (NMS 15.7)

- The governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school arrange for one of their number, or a representative who does not work at, or directly manage, the school, to visit the school once every half term and complete a written report on the conduct of the school. Where the school has an individual proprietor, that person may carry out such visits personally if they are not also the Headteacher (or school equivalent). (NMS 20.1)
- Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include: checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of physical interventions, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children; assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish). (NMS 20.2)

What should the school do to improve further?

- ensure all residential areas are furnished and decorated to a good standard
- ensure the designated person for health and safety is effective in establishing a co-ordinated system for maintaining good health and safety practices including fire safety practices.

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.



28/02/2012

Dear children

Inspection of Skilts School

We really enjoyed visiting your school recently and spending time with you. You were very polite and made us feel very welcome. I thank you for letting us join you at mealtimes and during your free time and activities.

You told us you really enjoy staying in the residential houses. You have lots of opportunities to do different activities which you really enjoy and you have lots of fun. You have very good relationships with staff who look after you very well. Staff give you a lot of praise for good behaviour and achievements you make. You are proud of the progress you make during your time at the school.

You feel safe in the residential houses and staff help you learn about different dangers and how to keep yourselves safe. Staff keep very good records of the work they do with you and share these with you regularly. Staff spend a lot of time listening to what you have to say and your suggestions are mostly acted upon.

Staff encourage you to eat a healthy diet and keep active. You like the food provided and are able to make suggestions to menus and some of you are able to cook your own tea, prepare snacks and supper. You enjoy using the 3 Peaks kitchen.

The residential houses are kept clean and are safely run. Most of the furniture is nice and comfortable and some of you have had new bedroom furniture which you really like. Staff are still making improvements in the houses. You know about fire drills and safety in the houses. You have your own bedroom which you are able to bring in your own things to make you 'feel at home'. You can contact your family when you want and staff will help you with this.

We have asked the headteacher to make sure that fire safety practices take place regularly.

This is a satisfactory school and you receive good care. You are very happy with the care and support you receive when you stay in the residential houses.

We really enjoyed meeting you all and visiting your school. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Katarina Djordjevic