

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC069336
Inspection date	09/03/2012
Inspector	Clare Davies
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

Date of last inspection	10/11/2011
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2012

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

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 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the progress made by the provider since the last full inspection, identifies any further strengths, any areas for improvement and makes judgements as outlined in the *Inspection of children's homes – framework for inspection (March 2011)*.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Good progress	The children's home has demonstrated continued improvement in quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the large majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Satisfactory progress	The children's home has maintained quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Inadequate progress	The children's home has failed to address one or more requirements and/or has not met the majority of recommendations and/or the quality of care and outcomes for children and young people have declined since the last full inspection.

Service information

Brief description of the service

This school provides care and accommodation for up-to-76 young people with autistic spectrum disorder and learning disabilities. It operates as an independent co-educational residential special school which also provides accommodation for a number of young people receiving up to 52 weeks placements and is therefore registered as a children's home.

Students are accommodated in eight on-site residential houses and one off-site house in a neighbouring village. The school is set around a restored country house, within acres of parkland.

Progress

Since their previous inspection the service is judged to be making **good** progress.

The overall effectiveness of this service was judged good at the full inspection in November 2011. One requirement and one recommendation were made at the full inspection and both have been met satisfactorily. This inspection identifies good progress for this service. No new requirements or recommendations have been made.

The provider has ensured that the new residential accommodation has an integral fire safety system linked to the security of the external doors, replacing the temporary arrangements that were insufficient at the last inspection. The procedures for selection and recruitment of staff have been of a consistently good standard and all staff are subject to clearance through the Criminal Records Bureau at an enhanced level. Records now explicitly states that this level of vetting has been undertaken. This is a large service employing over 200 staff. Recruitment campaigns have been very successful with the induction of 30 staff on the day of this inspection.

This service has appropriately dealt with some safeguarding issues since the last inspection, liaising appropriately with other agencies, including Ofsted, and maintaining comprehensive records. Continual monitoring by the senior leadership team ensures that incidents of behaviour management are well understood and discussed with the multi-disciplinary team on site to identify strategies to support students. Care staff are able to readily provide examples of progress that individual students have made. Many students have been supported when in crisis through the allocation of a dedicated small staff team. This provides consistency of care and reduces anxieties, enabling students to move on and achieve in their personal and social development. Staff report how some students have calmed in their behaviour and therefore are more able to access the curriculum and activities. The dedication of the care staff is evident as their enthusiasm shines through when talking about their work. When asked about the rewards of the job one member of staff stated,

'the students teach us something new everyday'.

Other areas of progress that this service has made has been the appointment of a male nurse to complement the nursing team. This will provide a gender balance and offer students more choice whilst being supported with their health care needs. The appointment of a fundraiser will assist in raising the profile of the specialism this service has to offer, whilst raising funds for further development. The manager reports that the restructure of the administrative team has greatly improved now that key staff have dedicated areas of responsibility, this has lead to a more effective service.

A refurbished cottage within the grounds has opened for four students enabling them to experience small group home living instead of the bigger residential units. This family style setting has lead to reduced anxieties for these students and therefore good progress in their individual targets. This is the second small group home within the school grounds and there are plans to open a third later in the year. This service recognises the value of small group living for some students with autism, particularly as they get older and get involved with life skills towards increased independence.

Further improvements have been made to one of the larger residential areas with the provision of relocated office space and the creation of an additional communal room for students to use with access to a computer. Each residential area has their own development plan that feeds into the bigger development plan of care provision. Along with education planning, these documents contribute to the overall school development plan. The senior leadership team has been restructured and membership widened. The formal agenda ensures key issues are discussed each time and avoids slippage of decisions made. Care staff report there is an improvement with communication across the service, it is considered that this is attributed to the restructure of the senior leadership team and the administrators.