

# Potterspury Lodge School

Independent school standard inspection report

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.<sup>1, 2</sup>

The inspection of boarding provision 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 the government of the quality and standard of the service provided.<sup>3, 4</sup>

## Information about the school

Potterspury Lodge is an independent residential special school near Towcester, Northamptonshire. It opened in 1956 as a Rudolph Steiner school; however, the school no longer follows a Steiner curriculum, although a holistic curriculum is an important part of the school's ethos. Its mission is to provide pupils with special educational needs with a wide range of opportunities to experience success. Provision is designed to help them achieve their full potential and meet the demands of life as an independent adult.

The school is registered to admit 64 boys and girls aged eight to 18 years. However, the school has not admitted girls since July 1988. There are currently 52 boys on roll aged 10 to 18 years. The school offers weekly and termly residential provision plus day provision. Two pupils are termly boarders and 14 reside weekly. The rest are day pupils. Post-16 pupils attend college four days a week.

All pupils have a statement of special educational needs, primarily for emotional, behavioural, and social difficulties. A significant number have various levels of autism. All are funded by various local authorities in England. The vast majority of pupils are White British. Two pupils are looked after.

The last inspection of education provision was in February 2009. The previous inspection of residential provision was in January 2012. This integrated inspection evaluated the quality of education and the residential experience, and the outcomes achieved in both settings.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents).

<sup>4</sup> [www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools).

## Evaluation of the school

The school provides a good quality of education and fulfils its mission. Teaching and an effective 24-hour curriculum ensures good school and residential outcomes. Provision for welfare, health and safety, in both the school and residential provision, is inadequate. This is because safeguarding arrangements, particularly child protection procedures, are not robust enough and do not follow national guidance. Because of this, the overall effectiveness of the residential experience, safety and the leadership and management of residential provision are inadequate. Most, but not all, education regulations and national minimum standards are met. Improvement since the last education and residential inspections has been mixed. The quality of education has been maintained, and the provision made for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved to outstanding. However, safety standards have deteriorated and some education regulations that were met in February 2009 are now unmet. Two of the three national minimum standards that were unmet in January 2012 have been addressed effectively. There has been insufficient improvement in ensuring that the residential safeguarding weakness, identified in the January 2012 report, was quickly remedied.

### Quality of education

The curriculum is good. It is supported by detailed schemes of work that cover all of the required areas of learning and includes all subjects of the National Curriculum. Provision leads to good outcomes for both education and residential settings. A broad range of courses, including post-16 provision in local colleges, is well matched to pupils' capabilities, interests and the objectives specified in individuals' statements. Provision includes study at GCSE; Entry Level courses are taught and vocational programmes of study are provided where relevant. Personal, social and health education, including the Life Skills programme, is good. For example, residential and day pupils learn to live independently in the independent flat, and pupils are taught about the importance of good personal hygiene practices and how to keep themselves safe. A broad range of therapies, which include speech and language, occupational and psychological support, effectively promote pupils' emotional well-being and their linguistic and physical development. A good programme of enrichment activities is provided. Pupils particularly enjoy outdoor pursuits and activity weeks and they like Monday and Friday afternoon choice time, where they can pursue their own interests, and welcome the opportunity to regularly 'chill-out'.

The 24-hour curriculum is supported well by activities in the residences. Rock climbing, scouts and explorer troops, sea cadets, fishing, sports and trips out all help to enrich learning in the evenings and at weekends. An appropriate careers education programme is provided which includes work experience in Years 10 and 11. In January 2009, there were insufficient visitors to the school. This shortcoming has been remedied. For example, the pupils talked enthusiastically about the visitor who brought in animals and they enjoyed talking about their welfare and care.

Teaching and assessment are good. While provision enables pupils to make good progress academically and in their personal development, it does not yet lead to

consistently outstanding outcomes. Where teaching is effective, it is because work is challenging, practical and interesting and it engages pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Information gained from assessment is used effectively to ensure that work is well matched to individuals' capabilities. Good use is made of resources to support learning. Effective, targeted one-to-one support helps pupils achieve lesson objectives. A range of effective behaviour management strategies is used to ensure that pupils remain on task and learning is not disrupted. Where teaching is less effective, it is mainly because activities are consolidating learning rather than extending it. At times, adults intervene and do things for pupils when they are quite capable of doing things for themselves. For example, by doing calculations for them or recording information because pupils cannot be bothered to record for themselves. A written homework policy does not exist and homework arrangements are ad hoc. Pupils who request homework sometimes get it, although there is inconsistency in approach. Some parents, carers and pupils would like regular homework, so that learning done in school is supported at home or in residences.

Assessment procedures are good. A variety of baseline assessments are used to determine pupils' attainment and specific needs on entry. Information gained from assessment is generally used effectively to plan lessons, and to prepare suitable care and behaviour plans. Marking is regular and developmental. Judgements made about attainment are secure but the tracking of pupils' progress is in its infancy and is underdeveloped.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Most pupils enjoy school and residential life. Attendance of residential pupils is good and day pupils come to school regularly and on time. Provision is very effective in improving pupils' behaviour, and successfully develops pupils' personal skills and their self-confidence and self-esteem. Behaviour is good because work is generally interesting and worthwhile, and staff implement the discipline policy well. Pupils like the rewards and merit system. They say arrangements are fair and they enjoy earning money for treats. Attitudes to learning are good and pupils are welcoming, courteous and respectful to staff and others most of the time. Very positive and trusting relationships are evident between adults and pupils, both in the school and residential settings. Good use is made of humour and this contributes to the very positive ethos. Pupils contribute very well to the school and wider community by raising money for good causes, keeping residential hostels tidy and helping to decorate the post-16 accommodation. The school council is making a difference by improving facilities and menus. The celebration of festivals, such as St John's Fire, Advent, and work on world faiths, helps pupils gain a good understanding of religious and cultural diversity. Provision promotes a tolerant and harmonious school community.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

Provision for welfare, health and safety is inadequate. This is because child protection arrangements do not follow national and local safeguarding guidance. The

child protection policy is not comprehensive enough. For example, procedures do not make explicit what happens if an allegation is made about a designated person. The designated person is not currently liaising effectively with the local safeguarding board, within reasonable timescales, to determine what action to take, and who undertakes investigations, when child protection or behaviour management concerns arise. This is despite all staff, including designated persons, being trained at the appropriate child protection level so that they know what expectations are. The school has agreed to rectify the shortfalls immediately. In January 2012, the recruitment of volunteers, working in the residential provision, was not always fully completed in line with national minimum requirements. This weakness has been remedied. The school has improved the procedures for children who go missing and the guidance now meets requirements.

Behaviour and anti-bullying procedures are clear and are implemented effectively. Pupils say that incidents of bullying do occur, but that they are dealt with promptly and to their satisfaction. Behaviour is well managed and good use is made of praise and rewards to encourage pupils to conform. Records of sanctions imposed upon pupils are suitably kept, but records of physical restraint are inconsistent and are often incomplete. Physical restraints are not properly recorded, monitored or audited. Senior leaders have signed off physical restraint reports that are not always dated and do not always contain a full description of events and/or outcomes. Pupils' views are insufficiently recorded.

Fire safety arrangements are satisfactory. Staff make regular checks on fire-fighting appliances, gas and electrical systems to make sure that equipment is fully operational. First aid and administration of medicines are well managed by suitably qualified personnel. Pupils say that the food is excellent and inspectors agree. It is hygienically prepared, and pupils have an input into menu planning and the review of food quality. The gardener grows the vegetables that pupils eat.

Supervision levels are high and pupils are very well supervised at all times. Attendance registers are maintained well but the admission register does not contain all of the required information. Good attention is paid to ensuring pupils lead a healthy lifestyle. Pupils take part in a wide range of activities involving physical activity, eat healthily, and are taught about personal hygiene and the dangers of drugs and alcohol. Those with special diets, or who have food intolerances or foibles, are effectively supported to ensure they get a balanced diet and food anxieties are reduced. The school fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

All education and residential staff, the proprietors, contractors and those on supply have been suitably vetted to confirm their suitability to work with pupils. All of the required recruitment checks have been carried out before staff are employed. Information contained in the single central register meets regulatory requirements.

## **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The education and residential premises and accommodation are of very good quality. They enable good learning outcomes to be achieved. The main house accommodates some teaching areas, one residential area, the main office, medical room, chapel and dining and kitchen facilities. Three further residential hostels, plus a number of classrooms and school facilities, are located in various buildings adjacent to the house. All buildings are well maintained and are kept in good decorative order. There are very extensive grounds and they are used effectively for play, recreation, sports and gardening. Classrooms are of a suitable size for the numbers using them and include specialist science, food technology, information and communication technology, physical education and post-16 areas.

The residential accommodation is homely, comfortable and maintains pupils' privacy but also provides opportunities for communal living. Bedrooms are suitably personalised with pupils' belongings and favoured items. There are plenty of toilets and washrooms facilities for adults, pupils and visitors in the school and residences. Appropriate provision is made for those who become ill. Food hygiene is excellent and the school kitchen has gained a five star rating environmental award in recognition of this.

## **Provision of information**

All of the regulations are met. Clear and up-to-date information is provided to parents and others in the school prospectus. The documentation supplied makes explicit what information is available from the school. All pupils are given a guide when they start school. It provides useful information about school rules, the timetable and curriculum offered with helpful detail about the residential experience. Satisfactory annual reports are provided to parents and carers about their children's attainment, progress, attitudes, effort and behaviour in all of the subjects taught. Comprehensive information is provided to local authorities for the purpose of the annual review of individuals' statement.

## **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The education and residential complaints policies meet requirements.

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

Leadership and management are inadequate. This is because the school fails to comply with all safeguarding national minimum standards so that residential pupils' welfare is at risk. The school has not made sufficient improvement on the significant safeguarding weakness identified in January 2012. Leaders have improved procedures for missing children and the recruitment of volunteers, and arrangements meet national minimum standards in these aspects.

The aims of boarding are clear and suitably inform practice. There are plenty of well trained, skilled and enthusiastic staff who have the energy and commitment to deliver good quality care and outcomes for residential pupils. The school does

recognise and plans effectively to meet the diverse and individual personal and academic needs of pupils. While the residential provision runs smoothly, there are important weaknesses in the way senior leaders review records and take action to improve child protection and restraint practices. Leaders do not effectively evaluate the quality of residential provision and an annual written report reviewing the operation and resourcing of the residential provision has not been produced, as required. Monitoring by the Principal, Head of Care and independent visitors is not coordinated effectively and has not led to sustained improvement in safeguarding practices to ensure national guidance is properly implemented. Appropriate records are not kept of physical intervention or child protection concerns.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.<sup>5</sup>

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and that these arrangements have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 7)
- ensure that arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of residential pupils and that they have regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools (paragraph 8)
- ensure that there are effective measures to ensure pupils' health and safety which have regard to Department for Education guidance, particularly with regard to the recording, monitoring and auditing of physical restraint practice (paragraph 11)
- ensure that the admission register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (paragraph 17).

## **National minimum standards**

In order to meet the national minimum standards for boarding schools or residential special schools and associated regulations, the school should:

- ensure that the school pays regard to the guidance issued by the Secretary of State 'Health and Safety': Department for Education Advice

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<sup>5</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made).



on Legal Duties and Powers for Local Authorities, Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies (national minimum standard 6.2)

- ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (national minimum standard 11)
- ensure that a comprehensive written record is kept of the use of any physical intervention and that the record is made within 24 hours of the sanction being applied and is legible. Encourage children to have their views recorded. Ensure that all instances of the use of physical intervention restraint are regularly reviewed to examine trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice (national minimum standard 12.6)
- ensure that records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate (national minimum standard 13.3)
- ensure that the Principal and trustees carry out, and record in writing, once each year:
  - a review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for residential pupils, in relation to its statement of purpose; its staffing policy and the placement plans for individual childrenand
  - an internal assessment of its compliance with the standards (national minimum standard 20.4).

## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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### The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils				✓
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## Overall effectiveness of the residential experience

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

## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Residential special school		
<b>Date school opened</b>	September 1956		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	8–18 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 52	Girls: 0	Total: 52
<b>Number of boarders</b>	Boys: 16	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 52	Girls: 0	Total: 52
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 2	Girls: 0	Total: 2
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£50,000		
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	£75,000 (weekly) £80,000 (termly)		
<b>Address of school</b>	Potterspury Lodge Towcester Northamptonshire NN12 7LL		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01908 542912		
<b>Email address</b>	mail@potterspurylodge.co.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	John Brown (Principal)		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Trustees of Potterspury Lodge School		

**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.**

25 June 2012

Dear Pupils



### **Inspection of Potterspurty Lodge School, Towcester NN12 7LL**

As you know, I recently inspected your school and residential provision with another inspector. I am writing this letter to tell you what we found out. We enjoyed our visit and thank you for being so welcoming, friendly and for talking to us and completing our questionnaire. Your school provides you with a good education but welfare, health and safety procedures, including child protection arrangements, are inadequate. This means that the overall effectiveness of the residential experience is inadequate too. Here are the main points from the report.

- Provision for your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Most of you enjoy coming to school, behave well and make good progress academically and in your personal development.
- Good teaching and a worthwhile curriculum help you acquire the necessary basic skills and personal qualities for adult life.
- You are well cared for and you say that you are treated fairly and with respect.
- You have developed good relationships with staff and each other and this means that the school has a very positive ethos.
- Your school and residential accommodation is very good and the grounds are stunning.

I have asked the Principal, Head of Care and the Trustees to improve the following weaknesses.

- Improve child protection and physical restraint procedures so that you are properly safeguarded.
- Ensure all government requirements are met and leaders evaluate the quality of the residential provision more effectively.
- Improve the tracking of your progress to determine how well you are achieving over time.
- Consider providing homework for those who want it and ensure staff always let you do things for yourself and only intervene in activities when necessary.

Yours sincerely

David Rzeznik  
Lead inspector