

King's Mill School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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Inspector Robert Curr / Angela Whiteley

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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

King's Mill School is a local authority maintained residential special school. The school provides education for up to 80 children aged two to 16 years, who have a range of learning disabilities and autism.

The school has a separate residential facility on site. Currently 40 pupils use the residential facility. Up to 13 pupils can stay at the residential facility each night but this number is usually lower. Pupils stay at the residence one or two nights per week on a regular basis. Some pupils also stay at weekends or for part of the school holidays. The school is situated in a residential area in the market town of Driffield. The residential and education provision were last inspected in October 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	outstanding
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 school's boarding provision is outstanding. Happy residential pupils enjoy positive and appropriate relationships with an experienced, dedicated, well trained staff team.
- Equality and diversity is very well promoted. Residential pupils make excellent progress from their starting points because they are highly valued as unique individuals and develop confidence and self-belief.
- Arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils are excellent. Stringent recruitment procedures and the robust monitoring and supervision of visitors protect boarders from unsafe adults. Effective child protection procedures are understood and implemented by all.
- Collaborative working arrangements with health care agencies provide residential pupils with the guidance, advice and support they need. Excellent catering provision further enhances their continued good health.
- Superb accommodation is safe, secure and maintained in excellent decorative order. Residential pupils enjoy their freedom of movement within spacious surroundings, complemented by the privacy of their own personalised bedrooms yet choosing to share a room with a friend from time to time.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of meaningful and enjoyable activities. Their development of social skills is greatly enhanced through community participation.
- Effective behaviour management systems focus upon positive reinforcement. They develop emotional intelligence and are given the skills they need to work out their own coping strategies.

- The leadership and management of the school are good. Senior managers implement effective quality assurance systems which drive improvements for the benefit of the boarders.
- There is clear evidence that areas for improvement that were highlighted at the previous inspection are ongoing. The senior leadership team have a development plan that is addressing a number of areas that includes reviewing a number of procedures and producing a DVD version of the statement of purpose.
- The boarding provision is strength of the school. The national minimum standards are met, with no weaknesses identified which have any direct impact on outcomes for residential pupils. There are four areas for improvement identified. These relate to further developing the plans around pupils independence activities and developing a risk assessment around surveillance. A member of the governing body would benefit from child protection training and the review of any policies and procedures identified in the schools development plan needs to continue.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Pupils greatly benefit from their residential experience and the individual support they receive. Without exception, all of the residential pupils speak very highly of their residential experience and the positive impact this has on them as individuals. For example, one person refers to being more mature and having improved relationships with their family. Specific reference is also made to the wide range of activities on offer, the positive relationships pupils have with staff and the support pupils receive in relation to managing their behaviour. Each of these aspects contribute to pupils making excellent progress in developing their self-esteem, social skills and emotional resilience and in turn contributes to their educational progress.

Regular house meetings encourage pupils to reflect on how events have impacted on individuals and the school community. This practice promotes an understanding and tolerance of others, increases the ability of pupils to accept praise and helps them develop more positive self-management skills.

Pupils benefit from positive, nurturing relationships with staff who provide positive role models and consistent routines. The health and well-being of pupils is supported by an informed staff team and through effective partnerships with other health care professionals. Pupils report they feel particularly well cared for when feeling unwell or anxious at night. A broad range of activities provide pupils with opportunities to keep physically active and develop new interests. For example, a group of pupils regularly attend a local disco to enjoy dancing.

Pupils' views are sought on a regular basis in relation to menus and activities and they are encouraged to make suggestions for the development of the residential

community through regular discussions with staff and the school council. Recent consultation with residential pupils resulted in the installation of a vertical lift so the building can be accessed by all pupils. These practices provide pupils with a sense of belonging and self-worth.

There are good opportunities for all residential students to develop independence skills such as changing their beds, cooking and developing road safety to help them to achieve their full potential. There is only one minor weakness. There is not sufficient detail in care plans to ensure these activities are well organised for the long term benefit of individual pupils who are planning to leave. These matters are currently under consideration as part of the on-going development of the school.

Comments from parents and external professionals in relation to the school are very positive. These include: 'Pastoral care is a strength of the school.' 'Staff know my child so well.' 'Staff are good at involving young people in reviews.' 'Staff always keep me informed' and 'staff have gone above and beyond their duty to provide support.'

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of boarding provision and care are outstanding. Admissions are planned and sensitively handled through effective procedures involving home visits and visits to the school. All residential pupils benefit from a seamless 24-hour curriculum. Pastoral care is a real strength of the school and pupils benefit from a committed and caring team of staff with a range of experience and interests. Effective working partnerships between care and education staff ensure pupils are provided with individual support tailored to their needs and any issues are promptly dealt with. The smallest achievements are celebrated, giving residential pupils a strong sense of personal development and fulfilment. Similarly birthdays, gaining qualifications and obtaining awards are all celebrated.

Staff value each pupil as an individual and demonstrate holistic knowledge of their character and needs. A key worker system is operated and contributes to the efficient co-ordination of information and attendance of individual pupils at meetings and reviews.

Designated health practitioners visit the school on a regular basis providing residential pupils and staff with advice and guidance. They also deliver health promotion advice to care staff, which they then deploy in their care of the pupils. The procedures for accurately administering medication are rigid and these practices ensure residential pupils receive their prescribed medication safely. There are clear care arrangements for when a pupil is unwell so that parents can be reassured their child's health is closely monitored until they arrive.

Pupils are provided with healthy and nutritious meals that offer them choice and variety. Menus take account of pupils' likes and dislikes through information gained from questionnaires and council meetings. Individual dietary needs are catered for

where required and staff sensitively monitor pupils' food intake. Meal times in the residence are social occasions and are set up to encourage the development of social skills and positive interaction between pupils. Catering staff have an excellent rapport with pupils and receive appropriate training for their role.

Residential accommodation is spacious, clean, pleasantly decorated and provides a welcoming environment. Pupils are able to personalise an area of their bedroom with pictures and photographs if they wish. Premises and outside areas are regularly checked and maintenance matters promptly attended to. Further building work to provide high quality enhanced facilities has taken place since the last inspection. Efficient provision is made for the laundering of pupils' clothing and bedding.

Care staff deal sensitively and effectively with residential pupils' needs and concerns. This includes the residential pupils having access to a complaints procedure, which is reflective of children's different methods of communication. Supporting this informative procedure are telephone numbers of external organisations that residential pupils can also contact to talk through any concerns, including the Children's Rights Director. This openness enables residential pupils to never feel isolated or fearful to raise concerns.

Residential pupils' safety

The arrangements for ensuring pupils' welfare and safety are outstanding. Robust recruitment procedures are efficiently operated and visitors and contractors on site are monitored. These practices help to reduce the risk of unsuitable people having contact with pupils. Effective policies, and procedures and risk assessments promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils and are regularly reviewed and updated.

All staff receive child protection training and regular updates appropriate to their role. There is a strong commitment by staff to tackle all types of bullying through initiatives and strategies that improve behaviour and increase awareness. This well implemented approach means no residential pupil experiences any form of bullying or discrimination from their fellow pupils or staff.

Residential pupils are protected from hazards associated with fire, water, electrical safety and also from going missing. Residential pupils report feeling extremely safe, protected and valued by staff. These strong relationships provide them with the knowledge that they will be protected. Individual assessments identify risks and strategies to address them. These are regularly reviewed and updated. However, the use of audible alarms in bedrooms to support residential pupils during the night is not assessed as to its benefits. This shortfall has not impacted on the safety and welfare of residential pupils.

Staff are vigilant at supervising pupils and residential pupils choose not to go missing. Staff are familiar with the school's procedures for dealing with such incidents and could take appropriate action should a pupil go missing.

Practice at the school means the welfare of residential pupils is always the most important consideration. This includes ensuring there are comprehensive records maintained for all incidents or concerns. Residential care and ancillary staff fully understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to health and safety matters so that the safety of residential pupils never becomes compromised.

A hierarchy of behavioural techniques are used which take into account the residential pupils age, understanding and the seriousness of the situation at any given point. This support enables residential pupils to cope with their emotions. Where care staff need to give additional help their use of diversion, re-direction and de-escalation is highly effective. This avoids behaviour escalating to a level where residential pupils become distressed and place themselves and others at risk of harm. Because of this highly effective approach, the use of restraint in the school is very rare.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The leadership and management of the residential provision are good. The provision is an integral part of the school and is efficiently and effectively managed. There is a strong focus on continuous improvement and equal and fair treatment for all pupils. The senior leadership team is strongly committed to providing a quality service to pupils, families and placing authorities. The school's aims are clear, communicated to all interested parties and translated into practice. Work is underway to extensively review a number of policies and procedures including the pupils' handbook. Work is currently being undertaken to produce a DVD version of the school's statement of boarding principles and practice involving staff and residential pupils.

There is amazing compassion, respect and support between residential pupils. This is built upon genuine concern for the welfare of others. Well-established routines provide pupils with consistency and contribute to a safe, orderly atmosphere and supportive environment. Staffing arrangements are effectively managed and ensure sufficient staff are on duty at all times. On-going changes made to duty rotas due to staff sickness and vacancies are positively embraced by staff who consider the changes to be of benefit to pupils. All staff have access to good support, guidance and training to support them in their role and systems are in place for the review of individual performance.

Parents, carers and placing authorities report they are kept regularly informed of residential pupils' progress and any concerns are shared. They enjoy positive relationships with the school and are made to feel welcome. Information regarding the school's complaints procedures is provided to pupils, parents and carers. Pupils are encouraged to raise any worries they may have at an early stage with an adult of their choice.

Regular opportunities are provided for residential pupils to express their views about

the daily life and development of the residential provision. Opportunities include school council meetings, daily contact with staff and key worker time. In the main pupils feel their views are listened to and things change as a result where possible.

There is effective monitoring by independent visitors and the head of care. This contributes to the development of the school and residential provision. The governors also support various sub-groups to ensure the safety, welfare and learning opportunities for all residential pupils remain the school's top priority. Despite this excellent commitment, not all governors have received child protection training.

It is recognised that the senior management team are still working towards improving a number of procedures and initiatives as highlighted by their self-evaluation. The areas for development are not having any direct impact on the provision for residential pupils at this time.

Appropriate records are maintained and securely stored. Files examined provide a good overview of an individual's time spent at the school, their development and progress.

National minimum standards

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

What should the school do to improve further?

- contribute further to the development of independence for pupils that are planning to leave the school, in particular, work collaboratively with pupils and key workers in implementing a plan
- carry out a risk assessment on the use of mobile audible surveillance systems to highlight the advantages and risks
- ensure that all those on the governing body that have a role within child protection receive training at the appropriate level
- continue to review all policies and procedures that have been highlighted by the management team, in particular, care planning formats, statement of purpose and the pupils guide to the residence.

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.



28/06/2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of King's Mill School

As you know, Ofsted recently inspected the residential provision in your school and spoke to many of you and the staff who look after you while you are staying there. It was helpful to receive additional comments from parents and other professionals who work with the school. Everyone had very positive things to say.

Thank you for speaking with us during the recent inspection. It was nice to meet you all. It always makes our inspections more accurate when we are able to speak with young people using the residence.

This is a fantastic school and you are well looked after by the staff and the manager during your overnight stays in the residence. They all understand the importance of supporting you and understand that you are all individuals with different needs.

You all told us that the staff are the most important feature of the residence. We think this is really clear because of the progress that you have made. You also enjoy doing lots of exciting activities with your friends. You enjoyed the disco you went to and said you are looking forward to going again.

We think that the whole staff team provide an excellent quality of care for you and try their best to work with you. Overall, the residence got an outstanding judgement and appears to be improving all the time.

If you would like to see a full copy of the report published after this inspection please ask the Head of Care or the Head of the school.

Yours sincerely

Rob Curr and Angela Whiteley

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Robert Curr / Angela Whiteley