

Northeast Manor 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

Northeast Manor is a residential special school for students aged between 10 and 17 years of age. The school is an independent co-educational situated near Lewes in East Sussex. The school offers education and boarding provision for able and potentially able pupils who have a range of specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit disorder, dyscalculia, and social and communication difficulties. The school has four boarding houses, one of which is for girls and the remaining three for boys. A total of 32 full-time and 4 flexi-boarders currently use the residential service throughout the week. The residential provision was last inspected on 5 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	good
Leadership and management of the residential provision	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness is outstanding and the high quality of the residential provision has had a positive impact on the progress and outcomes for students. This results in improved quality of residential students' lives and opportunities in life.
- The residential service has substantial strengths and where areas for improvement emerge the management team are forward thinking in recognising this and working towards achieving the necessary changes to promote advancement.
- The good safeguarding arrangements make certain that students' safety and well-being are key. Boarders feel extremely safe and well supported. Bullying and other instances of poor behaviour are very well managed and ensure that the safety and well-being of students is of paramount importance.
- Students enjoy positive and constructive relationships with staff and with each other. This ensures that students have a strong voice in the school and are treated with dignity and equal respect.
- Students thoroughly enjoy the boarding experience and actively engage in the stimulating opportunities and activities it offers. This provides an environment in which boarders' emotional, physical and social needs are fully acknowledged and actively promoted.
- The nurturing and caring attitudes of staff mean that the safety and well-being of residential students is of principal importance in promoting their needs. The highly committed and enthusiastic team of staff who work in the boarding houses and the successful leadership of boarding result in boarders receiving the very

best care.

- Behaviour is managed highly effectively and the systems in place to promote good behaviour help boarders to prepare for adult life or for the next stage of their education.
- The school caters extremely well for boarders' health. The robust healthcare arrangements in place and the varied diet provided result in promoting and maintaining students' physical, emotional and psychological health.
- The boarding provision has sustained its strengths from previous inspections and has continued to make improvements. The national minimum standards are met, with no weaknesses identified which have a direct impact on outcomes for residential students.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for boarders are outstanding. The residential experience allows students to establish highly successful, secure and stable relationships with care staff. Students are encouraged and supportive of one another and confirm that they feel very safe in the boarding environment. Individual support is given to each student according to their assessed emotional, physical and educational needs. Staff actively encourage and support students to develop their own uniqueness and identity. This allows students to develop self-confidence, independence and an understanding and tolerance of differences. Students behave very well and exceptional attitudes and good manners are evident when speaking with, or spending time with the students. Students are overwhelmingly positive about the boarding experience and of the excellent support they receive from staff. Students cannot praise staff enough for their input and the high quality care afforded to them during their time boarding at the school.

The school's head of boarding is creative in his approach to developing a purposeful and stimulating activity programme, which students thoroughly enjoy. The opportunities offered positively enhance students' personal growth and development. Students are fully supported and encouraged to contribute to the operation of the school. Young people's views are actively and regularly sought and listened to. There is an effective school council and boarders forum in which students' views have made a difference to decisions affecting their daily lives in the school. This includes a review of the supper mealtime arrangements and some minor changes to the routines within boarding houses. Students feel that what they say is important and that staff listen to and are respectful of their wishes and feelings. This inevitably helps to promote students' self-esteem, self-worth and confidence.

The school's well-established procedures help prepare boarders for the next stage of life after school. Students are actively encouraged throughout the residential experience, to take on responsibilities within the boarding community and to develop independent living skills. As students progress through the school, the Year 11

boarding house focuses on developing independence by encouraging opportunities for budgeting, shopping, menu planning, cookery activities, and facilities to undertake some washing of their own clothes. This helps students to develop skills in preparation of the transition from school to independence.

Excellent practices, policies and procedures are in place to ensure students' health needs promote the physical, emotional and psychological health and well-being of residential students. Individual health plans, effective links with a local doctors' surgery together with detailed health care records of any treatment received, and of any significant illnesses, accidents or incidents kept which cover all the areas required confirm that students' health needs are competently met. Students are extremely complimentary about how staff look after them if they do not feel well.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the residential provision is outstanding. Students are extremely well supported by staff to progress from the starting point when they entered the residential provision. Boarders are cared for by a very committed and enthusiastic team of skilled care staff. The excellent pastoral care arrangements support students' academic and educational progress. The highly effective links between pastoral and academic staff ensure students have the best opportunities and achieve their full potential. 'Taster' days to introduce students to boarding followed by individualised care plans inform the care given and help students settle into boarding. Students say they are made to feel most welcome and that care staff are extremely caring and approachable. An established key working system and effective communication systems promote continuity of care. This helps students to settle quickly into the routines and boarding life.

The school provides outstanding arrangements for promoting and caring for students' health and well-being. The medical room is managed by a designated member of staff who offers a responsive service to students who are unwell, or who need medical advice. Students are very happy with how health and well-being is managed by the school. Robust medication policies and procedures implemented in practice, appropriately trained staff, well-established health profiles and effective links with a local surgery underpins the high emphasis the school places on health care. Comprehensive health care forms and consent for non-prescribed, emergency and first aid treatment ensure that the school is fully aware of students' current health needs and has the relevant permissions to administer medication and give the necessary treatment. Consistent recording of medication received, administered and returned, which is subject to regular monitoring by a designated member of staff, support the good practice evident across the boarding houses. The well established systems and processes in place mean that student's well-being is actively promoted and urgent health care needs can be identified and appropriate action taken.

There is a range of purposeful and varied extra-curricular and leisure activities which

boarders thoroughly enjoy. Activities enjoyed by the students include cooking, computer club, gym, canoeing, football, fitness club and craft activities. Students enjoy a good choice of nourishing meals. Salad and fruit and water are available at mealtimes and students are afforded a good range of choice. Mealtimes are pleasant social events and help students to develop their social interactions with one another. Suggestions made by students about food have been considered by catering staff and have been effective in influencing some changes being made. Students expressed their satisfaction as to being listened to and of being able to make a difference. Special dietary needs are acknowledged and can be catered for as and when required.

The quality of the residential accommodation across the four boarding houses is of good quality. The cleanliness throughout the boarding accommodation is of an exemplary standard and areas throughout the residential accommodation have been personalised to promote a homey atmosphere. Toilet and washing facilities provide appropriate privacy and are suitable for the numbers of boarders accommodated. The boarding houses are very well maintained and provide boarders with suitable facilities where they can relax and feel comfortable.

Students stay in touch with their families through mobile phones. In addition, students also have free and private access to telephones in the boarding houses if needed. The students are very happy with the arrangements made for them to maintain contact with family and friends.

Residential pupils' safety

The school makes good arrangements for ensuring that students in their care are safe and protected from harm. Systems and training aim to protect students and ensure their well-being is actively promoted by the school. An established training programme which covers safeguarding is provided so that all staff are aware of their specific responsibilities relating to child protection. In addition, the head of boarding and the head teacher, who are the school's designated persons, are trained in child protection to the required level.

While the school's safeguarding and child protection policy should be extended to more clearly outline the role of governors within safeguarding, the school's practice in dealing with allegations or suspicions of harm is responsive and provides for the effective protection for children and minimises risk. Records kept are securely stored and ensure a clear audit trail of the sequence of events. This demonstrates that designated staff responsible for child protection know how to refer or deal with problems, so that young people are not at risk.

The robust recruitment procedures ensure that staff are fully checked prior to starting work at the school. The recruitment of staff is conducted in accordance with relevant guidance issued by the Secretary of State and this information is maintained on the school's single central record. Personnel files are securely stored and contain

the relevant recruitment information to evidence the established recruitment and vetting systems in place.

Students confirm that they feel safe and that staff help them to settle into boarding life. Students say that there are a range of people they can talk to if they have any worries or concerns and said that they felt listened to by staff. Throughout the duration of the inspection, students' behaviour and attitudes were well-managed. There was a calm and respectful atmosphere and interactions between students and staff are constructive and appropriate. This supports students to develop positive relationships and helps them to acquire necessary skills in managing conflict. The school has an established programme, combined with a clear policy for the use of physical interventions. The school's policy outlines what effective action should be taken to reduce risk and places a strong emphasis on using de-escalation techniques to modify behaviour. While physical interventions are rarely used, when implemented it is consistently applied. This involves seeking the views of the young person and de-briefing staff members involved. Brief records of any incidents of restraints are kept by the head of boarding as required. These, however, should be expanded upon to more fully reflect the follow up action taken by the school. There is a clear policy for countering bullying and boarders confirm that any bullying is taken seriously by the school. This contributes to how safe students feel at the school.

The school has highly effective systems in place for identifying and responding to hazards. This ensures the safety of students is actively promoted and maintained. Suitable health and safety checks are undertaken regularly to make certain that the residential accommodation and facilities are safe and secure. A designated site manager and a designated business manager ensure the on-going safety and maintenance of the environment. Well established systems and effective communication between the site manager and business manager result in a highly responsive service to any potential hazards and means that the required health and safety checks are competently completed. Excellent monitoring and overview is in place for health and safety. In addition, a comprehensive fire risk assessment has been completed and fully implemented. This has resulted in clear evidence of improvements which have been acknowledged by the local authority fire officer.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The management and organisation of boarding is outstanding. The school's Statement of Purpose clearly outlines the aims and objectives of boarding. Boarding is competently organised and run in a consistent way to meet the differing needs and ages of students. The two national minimum standards not met and the four areas identified that the school could do to improve further identified at the last inspection have been suitably addressed. Routines and procedures are very clear and all the required policies are in place to promote positive outcomes for young people.

The school's work in introducing an electronic system of recording and retrieving data on health care, incidents, behaviour management and health and safety matters

across the school has inevitably improved the quality and efficiency of records kept by the school. An area identified for improvement is to move towards integrating the existing manual recording systems currently operating within boarding to this system to further promote efficiencies and to ensure a whole school approach to record keeping.

The school is led by a senior management team comprising of head teacher, deputy head, and two assistant heads, one of whom has this term been assigned responsibility for behaviour and safeguarding. The assistant head responsible for behaviour and safeguarding works closely with the head of boarding. This helps to ensure consistency of practice between academic and residential staff. The board of governors are very supportive of the head teacher and of the staff team. This includes the chair of governors conducting regular monitoring visits to the school to check records and buildings. Written reports of monitoring visits are produced, however these are limited in terms of the detail recorded. Regular meetings between the governor designated to take the lead on safeguarding and the head of boarding also take place. The input from governors ensures that boarding is seen as an integral part of the school.

The care staff team are self-motivated and committed to improve outcomes for the boarders. The care staff are extremely enthusiastic and boarding and its contribution to boarders' personal and social development is highly valued within the school. The head of boarding maintains purposeful and effective communication amongst the care staff and is proactive in ensuring students' needs are paramount and are met well. The care team feel supported and valued, and this is reflected in a stable group with a supportive atmosphere and the continuity of care afforded to students. The deployment of pastoral staff is appropriate and allows for boarders to be appropriately supervised. The pastoral care team is diverse in gender and age providing a varied range of adult role models for students to identify with.

Students know how to complain and are confident that staff will listen to them and take their concerns seriously. A complaints procedure, which is available on the school's website, outlines how the school manages complaints. Records are securely kept to ensure appropriate confidentiality of information.

National minimum standards

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

What should the school do to improve further?

- further develop the school's safeguarding and child protection policy to more clearly outline the role of governors within safeguarding
- review the written record kept of the use of any physical intervention to make sure there is clear evidence that the school regularly reviews any instances and examines trends or issues; to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice
- consider integrating the existing manual recording systems operating within boarding with the school's electronic system of recording to promote a whole school approach and improve efficiency

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.



25/09/2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Northease Manor School

As you will know, Ofsted recently visited your school to carry out an inspection of the boarding provision in your school. As the inspector I spent time in the boarding houses and joined you at mealtimes in the dining hall. I spoke to many of you and the staff who look after you. Thank you so much for making me feel so welcome and for taking the time to talk to me about your experience as a boarder at the school.

Many of you told me about how much you enjoyed boarding. You also talked to me about the help and support you receive from staff and of how kind they are to you. I was very impressed by your good manners and of how polite and respectful you are of one another. I saw the positive relationships many of you have with the adults who care for you. I was really impressed that you had the confidence to talk to me so honestly and allowed me to share two very enjoyable meals with you. It is your confidence that helps you to express your views and makes things change for the better.

The boarding houses have a homely atmosphere where you can relax and make friends. I liked seeing all the activities you get involved in after school has finished. I particularly enjoyed hearing how much you valued the activities that are arranged by the school.

I think that the school offers you an outstanding quality of boarding. It was a real pleasure meeting you. I wish you all the very best for your future.

Yours sincerely,

Angela Hunt