

Muntham House School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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Inspector Keith Riley

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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

The school is a non-maintained residential special school for 53 boys aged between 8 and 18 years. At this inspection there were 42 residential pupils. It is a designated school for pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties who may in addition have Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder (AD(H)D). All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

The school buildings are set in extensive grounds. Accommodation is located in the main building and in a separate building for the sixth form. There are numerous outdoor areas for the pupils to enjoy activities.

The school was last inspected in November 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	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of the boarding provision at the school is outstanding. Boarders receive a high quality of individualised care within a caring and nurturing environment, and where the potential of each pupil is maximised. There is a highly inclusive environment where boarders develop exceptionally good relationships with each other and the staff that are supporting them. They see themselves as belonging to the wider school family and look forward to coming to the school after holidays.
- Boarders enjoy excellent relationships with the staff caring for them and develop positive and meaningful relationships with fellow students. There is a strong sense of respect for others which runs through the school and the behaviour of boarders is exemplary. They enjoy the residential experience, feel safe while living at the school, and take advantage of a wide range of positive and constructive activities available to them. The principles of equality and diversity underpin the excellent care provided for pupils. They are treated with dignity and respect as individuals and have a strong voice within the school.
- Pupils' emotional well-being is promoted to an excellent standard. The school ensures that pupils receive swift access to psychological and psychiatric services and have access to therapies which further support their well-being. Software has been installed since the last inspection and is used to monitor positive and negative behaviour. Detailed analysis of incidents in a multidisciplinary environment leads to regular feedback into practice and extremely positive outcomes for boarders.
- The safety and well-being of students across the campus is of paramount importance and there are robust safeguarding arrangements which are highly

effective. Boarders feel safe within a physical environment where there are excellent arrangements for security and the management of risk associated with all activities they undertake. Policies and procedures support and promote good practice across the school and staff are well trained in matters relating to the safeguarding of students. Procedures for recruitment, health and safety, and fire safety are being rigorously applied and contribute effectively to protecting the welfare of boarders.

- The residential provision for pupils is an integral aspect of the school and is being managed highly effectively and efficiently. The staffing arrangements ensure there is sufficient qualified and experienced staff to meet the needs of boarders both day and night. The professional development of staff is given a high priority as well as on-going support and guidance. Boarders are supported by a competent and committed staff team who themselves are well supported.
- A highly integrated approach across the school is a significant strength which benefit boarders. Exceptional collaborative working and attention to detail ensures all aspects of care are highly personalised to meet the individual needs of each pupil. Health, education and welfare staff work extremely well together and with external agencies. Boarders make excellent progress in their personal and social development and clearly grow in confidence during their time at the school. There is full inclusion within the local and wider community including links with schools overseas. Boarders speak very positively of these opportunities.
- The residential accommodation and surrounding areas are maintained to a high standard. There has been a significant rolling refurbishment programme since the last inspection. However, it was found the temperature in some of the showers is not always consistent.
- Health is promoted to an exceptional standard. Nutritious and healthy meals and snacks are available and there is exceptional participation and enthusiasm in sports such as football to keep fit and healthy as possible. There are highly effective arrangements in promoting all aspects of health including emotional and psychological well-being as well as more complex medical needs such as epilepsy.
- The school meets all of the national minimum standards and has successfully addressed the recommendation from the previous inspection. Outstanding practice has been sustained and there is exceptional provision for monitoring, self-evaluation, and for driving forward improvements linked to the school development plan. Boarders are extremely positive about the residential experience and thoroughly enjoy their time living at the school.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for boarders are outstanding. Boarders benefit from a supportive and nurturing environment where they develop their skills, independence and confidence. Boarders are encouraged and enabled, with excellent support, to develop constructive, tolerant relationships with their peers as well as the adults caring for

them. Their behaviour is of a very good standard and benefits from an environment with clear boundaries and where tolerance and respect is promoted and valued. Boarders give very positive feedback about their experience.

Boarders' opinions are valued. They have numerous members of staff and adults to whom they can voice their thoughts and feelings. Boarders are able to speak out as individuals or as groups and feel they have a voice in the school. They are able to influence choices such as activities. Boarders have ready access to key workers, tutors and other residential and teaching staff. Additionally, they have ready access to senior members of staff who are present throughout the school day and in the evenings and an independent visitor who makes unannounced visits to the school.

Boarders' health is promoted to an excellent standard. They have access to doctors, dentists and opticians and the school ensures that their needs are met in these areas. Their emotional health is promoted to a particularly high standard; they have access to numerous therapists to meet their individual needs. Such staff are readily accessible and spend time with the boarders in the boarding houses. The routines and support which boarders receive from all staff, enable them to feel emotionally safe and very closely supported.

Boarders enjoy their boarding experience. They are offered an excellent range of enriching activities and experience. They experience success and receive positive acknowledgment which helps them to develop their self-esteem and sense of worth, for example by winning national competitions. Their behaviour is of an excellent standard and they benefit from having clear boundaries and detailed behaviour management plans.

Clear and concise analysis of positive and negative behaviours, making excellent use of innovative technology, means strategies and approaches are under constant review to ensure optimum progress for each individual boarder.

Boarders benefit from particularly well-planned and structured transition plans. Each pupil has a plan aimed at developing their life skills at a pace and level appropriate to their understanding and ability. Support for the pupils during this time is excellent and ensures that they receive opportunities to become independent and confident members of society.

Boarders are very well prepared for adult life. Comprehensive transitions plans, which are personalised for each boarder, give optimum opportunity for success and improved life chances. Boarders successfully gain employment or further education when leaving the school and are equipped with daily living skills.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the residential provision is excellent. Care plans are of an excellent standard. Boarders' needs are understood. Individual plans outline the strengths, vulnerabilities and strategies for support which is inclusive of cultural and spiritual

needs. Pastoral support offered to boarders is extremely supportive and nurturing. Each boarder receives a thorough induction in order to prepare for life at the school. There is excellent joined up working between educational staff and residential care staff to ensure positive outcomes. Excellent communication is achieved and all members of staff are aware of the most up to date needs of boarders and the best possible strategies to support them.

Boarders are offered excellent opportunities to develop their academic abilities as a result of detailed education and care plans. The plans contain achievable targets and the effectiveness of the plans is assessed at regular reviews. Behaviour management plans and crisis intervention plans are of an excellent standard. These plans give members of staff a good knowledge of how to intervene and support boarders' emotional and behavioural needs.

Members of staff ensure that the boarders have access to a wide range of interesting and stimulating activities. These enable them to develop their self-esteem and confidence and to show them that leisure time can be spent productively and positively.

Boarders have access to very good health services and information. Routine health care needs are met with the staff facilitating appointments if needed and ensuring the boarders are supported to attend these. Access to specialist health care, such as psychologists and therapeutic services are also arranged promptly. This approach ensures that the boarders have their emotional well-being promoted to a particularly high standard. Systems to ensure that medication is recorded and administered are robust. Healthy living is encouraged and this is provided not only by ensuring the boarders have access to health care, but by encouraging exercise and a healthy diet.

Food is of an excellent standard and individual dietary need whether culturally related or health related, are known and met. Meals are well ordered social occasions with close staff support and supervision. Meals are seen as an opportunity for the boarders to develop social skills.

Residential accommodation is of an excellent standard. There is a rolling refurbishment programme and there has been significant progress made since the last inspection. Accommodation is comfortable, well furnished, and maintained to good standard. Boarders are able to personalise their own rooms. One point of improvement is to review the supply of cold water to the showers to ensure there is a consistent temperature at all times.

Boarders are able to contact families, carers and loved ones by using their own mobile telephones or the school telephones.

Residential pupils' safety

There is excellent provision at the school for ensuring boarders are safe and protected from harm. The culture embedded in the school ensures that the boarders benefit from a robust and rigorous approach which treats their emotional and physical safety as paramount. Designated senior staff take lead responsibility for child protection and receive training relevant to the role.

Care staff have a good awareness of safe working practices and complete child protection refresher training regularly. Concerns are promptly passed on to the relevant agencies and records are clear and detailed on how each issue has been pursued and resolved. All staff are proactive in promoting and protecting the welfare of pupils and effectively implement the school's safeguarding policies and procedures. Records kept of any incidents are very well organised and of a high quality.

Recruitment procedures are effectively implemented. The thorough and robust recruitment procedure ensures that only adults, who have been checked as being appropriate to work with children, are employed.

Incidents are carefully analysed using software customised to break down bullying into its various forms. Bullying behaviour is not identified as an issue. Boarders report feeling safe within the residential provision. Staff manage successfully any group dynamics to ensure there is a calm and harmonious environment.

There is a comprehensive procedure in place in the event a boarder goes missing. This includes agreed protocols with the local police and other agencies. However going missing is not identified as a current issue. Boarders say they feel safe and content in the school and have people they can talk to about any concerns.

Behaviour management is very carefully thought through. For example, individual plans for boarders ensure that strategies are in place, enabling them to maintain positive behaviour. The strategies are successful and boarders develop coping strategies and achieve much improved standards of behaviour. Positive behaviour is encouraged and celebrated. Excellent records are maintained of any incidents requiring physical intervention. These are carefully analysed as to their appropriateness and boarders are able to add their views and comments related to incidents they have been involved in. This ensures that strategies are under constant review and amended to suit individual needs and progress.

Positive behaviour is encouraged and celebrated. Boarders are seen to behave well and with tolerance of each other. There are very clear boundaries in place and boarders know what the behavioural expectations and rules are. Individual risk assessments address boarders' behavioural issues. These include strategies to manage risk and to support the boarders.

The safety of the school and residential provision is monitored effectively. Fire precautions and fire equipment are checked on a regular basis. Fire drills are held regularly. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated. These include environmental checks as well as on site and off site activities. Visitors are signed in and monitored while on the premises and a closed circuit television system provides additional security.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

Leadership and management of the school are of an outstanding calibre. It is a key strength and influence on driving and expecting high standards from staff and pupils. This ensures that the boarding community is seen as a central and important aspect of the school. The residential provision is managed to ensure consistent care across the different residential areas. Boarders benefit from clear routines and boundaries and are nurtured to develop tolerance and understanding of each other's behaviour. Boarders are experiencing consistent, well-planned care across a 24 hour curriculum. Diverse needs are catered for sensitively and this results in fair and equal treatment for all boarders.

The school has a dedicated board of governors. They undertake unannounced independent monitoring visits and produce a report about their findings. This contributes to the on-going development of the school. Boarders know who the governors are and see them as an integral part of the school community.

Boarders benefit from a consistent and committed staff team who have excellent opportunities for professional development. Boarders are supported by a competent and committed staff team who are themselves well supported though, for example, regular supervision. An induction programme ensures new members of staff are very well prepared to work at the school. This means that staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities.

Staffing levels ensure the individual needs of boarders are able to be met effectively and policies and procedures in place support and promote excellent practice across the school. A stable staff team, with a low turnover ensures that consistent and experienced adults are available to offer very good levels of advice and nurturing to the boarders. Parents report excellent communication with the school. Additionally, an excellent service, that is easy to access, is available to parents, offering on-going advice and emotional support. A full complaints system is in place if there should be a need for parents to complain.

Detailed monitoring systems and clear lines of responsibility ensure that performance is analysed with a view to achieving high standards. This also contributes to improving on performance and delivery. The systems operated ensure that practice is analysed and areas for improvement acknowledged and acted upon. The school consults other external professionals to ensure the support offered is most up to date and of the highest quality.

All information is appropriately and safely stored to ensure that confidentiality of records is maintained. Records kept are thorough and give a comprehensive account of each boarder's time, experience and progress at the school.

The one recommendation made at the last inspection has been addressed thoroughly. The school now has clear agreement with the local police about missing person protocols.

The comprehensive and consistent approach to assessment and on-going support at a senior level ensures strategies are in place and under constant review. This ensures that the well-being of the whole school community is promoted and protected on a daily basis. Placing authorities say the school has, 'a proven track record in delivering a high standard of service.'

National minimum standards

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

What should the school do to improve further?

- review the supply of water to the showers so they run at a more consistent temperature.

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.



10/10/2012

Dear boarders,

Inspection of Muntham House School

As you will know I recently conducted the Ofsted inspection for the boarding houses at your school. I went to Bodiam, Arundel and Hever and spoke to many of you. I met with members of staff and looked at records as well as enjoying lunch, an evening meal and an activity with some of you. Many of you said what a great school it is and how much you enjoy being there. I agree. Your school provides a very caring and supportive place for you to live. It is good that you all have different members of staff who you can talk with and access to counselling. It was very good to see you all relaxing with members of staff and that you can laugh together.

I was very impressed with the activities that you are offered and the opportunities you have in the community especially with regard to football. I saw you all behaving very well and thought that you were very tolerant of each other. I am pleased that you can all telephone your home and speak to those who are important to you.

Your health is looked after at the school. Staff help you to learn how to eat healthily and take exercise. They also help you to remain calm and not become upset by issues that may happen. The staff work with you to help you to become independent and prepare for adulthood.

The boarding houses are comfortable and there has been a good refurbishment programme. I have asked the water supply be looked at in the showers so they run at a more consistent temperature.

Overall, I was very impressed with your school and think that you all do very well there. I found it to be outstanding in all areas.

I really enjoyed meeting you all and wishes you all the best for the future.

Keith Riley

Yours sincerely,

Keith Riley