

Mount Tamar Special 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

This residential special school is a maintained school. It provides education and care and is registered for 103 children including 24 residential pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The residential provision operates as a support for educational needs. The building is situated centrally on the school site. The residential provision is open four nights a week during term time. Pupils attend from one to four nights according to need. A highly structured routine is offered. A variety of on and off site activities are available. The last inspection was 29th February 2012

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boardingschools.

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.

- Residential pupils make excellent progress. Staff provide a very high quality of care that is fully supportive. As a result, young people learn to develop social skills, support one another and feel safe. Residential pupils could not think of anything that staff could do to improve the service. One residential pupil said "I love coming here, it is awesome."
- Safety of residential pupils is promoted and protected through robust and effective procedures. Staff are very well trained and sensitive to young people's concerns and behaviours. Robust safeguarding of residential pupils is at the heart of the service.
- Residential pupils enjoy staying in comfortable, warm and well furnished accommodation. The hostel offers spacious accommodation with games rooms, a computer room and two lounges where residential pupils are able to relax.
- Behaviour management is outstanding. Restraint is rare and sanctions imposed are minimal. Residential pupils behave very well and are extremely well supported to overcome personal difficulties. Staff fully praise achievements and have high aspirations and expectations. Innovative practice ensures that residential pupils make outstanding improvements in their behaviour and social skills.
- Residential pupils are provided with excellent opportunities to take part in activities in and out of the residential provision. Structured and purposeful activities positively channel the energies of the residential pupils and give them a sense of achievement. Residential pupils said that they really enjoyed the activities and holidays offered.

- Placement plans and behaviour management plans are comprehensive, clear and concise. They give clear guidance to staff and have an effective impact on outcomes for residential pupils. Records are well managed and are securely stored.
- The residential provision provides a very safe environment through robust procedures for ensuring fire drills regularly take place and electrical, gas and fire safety equipment are fully tested and checked.
- The leadership and management of the residential provision is outstanding. The skilled and inspirational manager motivates the experienced and enthusiastic staff team to provide an outstanding service for residential pupils and constantly look for ways to improve the quality of care and the achievements of residential pupils. All areas for improvement raised at the previous inspection have been met.
- Residential pupil, parents and placing social workers value the service very highly. One parent said "the hostel is a godsend to me. My child is learning new things, making friends and doing things like washing their clothes that they won't do at home."

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Staff at the residential provision work effectively to ensure excellent outcomes for all residential pupils. Residential pupils stay for a maximum of two nights per week during term time. Despite this limited stay, residential pupils make excellent progress from their starting points in all areas of their lives and a real strength of the residential provision is the progress that residential pupils make socially and emotionally. Residential pupils really enjoy staying at the residential provision. One young person said "I would rather live here than at home, its brilliant." Another young person said, 'I love coming here the staff make me laugh.'

Individual care needs are fully met, behaviour is extremely well managed and as a result, residential pupils behave well and are tolerant and kind to each other. Academic and residential staff at the school closely liaise and effectively communicate to ensure consistency in learning.

Social skills, personal development and communication skills are developed and enhanced as a result of residential pupils stay at the residential provision. New interests and skills are developed both in the residential provision and in the community. New friendships are made and residential pupils gain a sense of independence. Residential pupils have a say in the running of the residential provision, and feel like it is a home from home. residential pupils learn to respect and value themselves, the staff, the building and each other.

Residential pupils feel very safe and are very safe when they are staying at the

residential provision. Safeguarding procedures are extremely robust and staff are very vigilant regarding the well-being and safety of residential pupils.

Residential pupils learn about healthy eating, enjoy good quality meals and learn to cook meals. Health care needs are fully met and promoted through comprehensive health care plans and skilled and well trained staff.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of care is outstanding. Residential pupils staying benefit from an excellent quality of care and support that is provided by a skilled and experienced staff team. It is evident that the staff genuinely care about each and every one of the residential pupils, have high aspirations for them and work very hard so that each young person achieves positive outcomes. Residential pupils respond very positively and this is reflected in their willingness to try to change and learn from their behaviour and acquire new skills.

Staff devise pro-active and imaginative ways of meeting the needs of residential pupils. Staff know and understand each young person really well and will work with that young person on an individualised basis that fully meets their needs. For example, residential pupils may need extra nurturing due to difficulties at home. Staff know this and, for example, may provide breakfast each morning before school, even when that young person is not booked in to the residential provision that evening. Staff willingly spend extra time with individual residential pupils listening to their concerns.

Equality and diversity issues are fully recognised and addressed by staff. Individualised placement plans and care ensure that all individual care needs are met. Residential pupils are helped to learn about different cultures through planning foreign holidays, cooking different dishes from around the world and learning about the country of their origin. Diverse care needs are catered for sensitively. This results in fair and equal treatment of all residential pupils and creates an atmosphere of tolerance and respect.

Placement plans are detailed and comprehensive. Staff have clear and relevant information and guidance regarding how they are to consistently meet the care needs of residential pupils. One example of innovative practice at the residential provision is that all residential pupils are registered on an accredited award scheme. Award certificates are issued when residential pupils achieve the targets set out in their placement plans. This could be for tasks such as learning to tie shoe laces, telling the time or completing personal care tasks. The use of this award scheme means that targets and achievements are constantly monitored and updated on placement plans as residential pupils learn new skills. Residential pupils said that they liked taking part in the award scheme and thought that earning a certificate helped them to learn new skills and gain a sense of achievement. These achievements consequently boost their self-esteem.

Relationships between staff and residential pupils are exceptionally warm, trusting and full of appropriate humour. Staff have successfully achieved a balance of gaining respect from residential pupils while enjoying a friendly and supportive relationship with them. This means that residential pupils trust staff with any issues that are worrying them or any safeguarding concerns that they may have at home. Regular key working sessions offer residential pupils one-to-one time with their keyworker.

Residential pupils said that they really liked taking part in activities that are on offer at the residential provision. One residential pupil said: 'I really like going fishing and trampolining. I went on holiday last year with the residential provision and it was fun.' Staff ask residential pupils for their ideas about new activities and have planned a foreign holiday this year. This planning has involved residential pupils learning how to apply for a passport, learning about foreign currency and how to use an airport. Staff ensure that the energies of residential pupils are used constructively and positively and as an opportunity to develop their social skills both in the residential provision and in the community.

Health care needs of residential pupils are fully met when they stay at the residential provision. Staff are very knowledgeable about the health care needs of all residential pupils. These needs are clearly documented in placement plans. Parents retain overall responsibility for health care. Staff contribute to reviews by health care professionals such as psychotherapists or psychologists. On the day of the inspection some residential pupils were taken ill. Staff cared for them appropriately until their parents arrived to collect them. Medication procedures are robust and medication is safely stored and administered.

Communication between school and residential provision staff is effective and comprehensive. This is achieved through the use of communication books and regular meetings between academic and residential staff. This ensures that staff are aware of any issues that may have arisen during the school day.

Residential pupils enjoy meals that are good quality, nutritious and plentiful. Residential pupils said that they liked the meals and helped to plan the menus. Meals are prepared and cooked in the school kitchen. Residential pupils can learn cookery skills and make snacks and drinks in the residential provision's kitchen. Fresh fruit is always available. Meals are sociable and orderly occasions and residential pupils learn about healthy eating, gain table manners and learn social and independent living skills.

Residential pupils enjoy staying in the residential provision and said that they liked their bedrooms. Staff have made the building as homely as possible and it has recently benefitted from being decorated. Pictures have been bought and hung and new bedding has been obtained. Residential pupils said that they were always warm enough and couldn't think of anything that could be done to make the residential provision a better place to stay in. Flooring is worn in one toilet. New tiles have been

purchased but have not yet been fitted. Residential pupils have the use of the school playing fields and a large games room. There are and lounges where residential pupils can relax with the television, books and games. Internet access is available in the computer room and residential pupils are able to telephone their family and friends in private. On rare occasions, teachers from the school use the residential provision for meetings. These do not take place when residential pupils are using the residential provision; therefore the impact on residential pupils is minimal. However, it does mean that the residential provision is not exclusively used by residential pupils.

Staff ensure that all residential pupils are carefully and sensitively introduced to the residential provision. For example, one parent said that: 'staff were very good about introducing my son slowly and carefully so he was ok about staying.' Parents are fully involved in the introductions and residential pupils are able to undertake tea visits and overnight stays prior to staying at the residential provision. The school also has an outreach worker who supports families and has close communication with staff in the residential provision. residential pupils stay at the residential provision for a maximum of two nights per week during term time. Groups of residential pupils are arranged according to their age and needs. When a young person leaves the school, staff at the residential provision are fully involved in transitions to other schools or further education. Residential pupils who have left the residential provision regularly return to visit staff. One former residential pupil said 'the residential provision still feels like my other home.' Another former residential pupils said 'residential pupils should really appreciate what is here because you don't realise how great it is until you have left.'

Residential pupils' safety

The systems to ensure safety are outstanding. Residential pupils said that they feel very safe when staying at the residential provision. Staff are extremely vigilant and because they know each young person so well, and are able to recognise any slight change in behaviour that may indicate something is wrong. Staff gain safeguarding information through feedback sessions from residential pupils that are held at the end of each day. Staff sensitively and subtly question residential pupils to ensure that residential pupils are not engaging in risk taking behaviours out of school and that they are safe at home.

Safeguarding matters are immediately reported to the school safeguarding officer. Clear safeguarding procedures are in place and staff are clear about what action they should take if they have any safeguarding concerns. The school has robust links with the area Local Authority Designated Officer. All staff are trained regularly in safeguarding children and are pro-active about working with other agencies and services to ensure the safety and well-being of all the residential pupils in their care. Residential pupils were clear about who they would go and speak to if they felt unsafe.

Clear counter bullying policies and procedures are in place. Residential pupils said that bullying is not an issue at the residential provision and said if there was any then staff would deal with it. Staff are knowledgeable about which residential pupils have personality clashes with each other and put strategies in place to effectively deal with this.

residential pupils can gain an accredited award in counter bullying if it is thought they are at risk of being bullied or being a bully.

A real strength of the residential provision is how behaviour is managed. Staff are consistent and fair in their dealings with residential pupils and have clear boundaries in place. Staff have high expectations of how residential pupils are to behave in the residential provision and constantly remind residential pupils about these expectations. Consequently, residential pupils behave very well and learn social and communication skills and how to manage their anger and behaviour. Routines run smoothly and residential pupils know what is expected of them. Staff praise and reward positive behaviour and deal effectively with unwanted behaviour. This is done through de-escalating any difficult situations through the use of de-escalation strategies and a very effective use of humour. Sanctions are rare. When a sanction such as loss of TV time is imposed, residential pupils said that they thought it was fair. Restraints are rare and only used as a very last resort for safety reasons. All staff are fully trained in the use of restraint. Sanctions and restraints are comprehensively recorded. There have been no incidents of a residential pupil going missing from the residential provision. Staff know how to effectively manage behaviour and this information is contained in the behaviour management plan of each young person.

An excellent approach towards risk management is taken. This approach enables residential pupils to take reasonable risks while keeping them safe. For example, residential pupils can experience activities such as trampolining and going out alone on free time. Staff put in measures to ensure that they are as safe as possible. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place for the building and any activities that take place in the community.

Staff recruitment systems are extremely robust and thorough. There have been no staff changes for five years. However, any new staff would only be permitted to work at the residential provision once the appropriate checks and references have been received. This ensures that only suitable persons are able to work with the residential pupils. Visitors are closely monitored to the residential provision and a visitors' book is in operation to ensure the safety of residential pupils.

Health and safety is very well managed in the residential provision. There are regular checks of equipment such as electrical systems and gas appliances. Fire drills take place on a regular basis and residential pupils knew what action to take if there was a fire. New residential pupils take part in a fire drill on their first evening in the residential provision to ensure that they know what to do in the event of a fire.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

Leadership and management is outstanding. The residential provision is very effectively and efficiently managed by a very experienced manager. Routines at the residential provision are well established, run very smoothly and staff are very clear about their roles and what they are trying to achieve with residential pupils. The manager and staff are extremely enthusiastic about their achievements and aspirations for residential pupils and clearly really enjoy working with them.

Staff have very good opportunities for professional development and training. Very good quality supervision is offered to staff on a regular basis and staff benefit from an annual appraisal. This ensures that staff remain knowledgeable and clear about their roles and responsibilities. Staff commented that they thought the training on offer was comprehensive and equipped them with all that they needed to know to meet the needs of residential pupils. For example, due to the admission of residential pupils with autism to the home, staff have undertaken training in this subject. Staff have also undertaken training from an awarding body so that they are able to be assessors for the accredited award scheme that residential pupils are undertaking.

Staffing levels are high and are fully able to meet the individual care needs of residential pupils. Residential pupils said that there is always a member of staff to talk to or to help them with anything they needed.

Clear development and maintenance plans address identified weaknesses of the residential provision. Targets for improvement are time limited and focused. This ensures that improvements in the service are constant and the extremely high quality of care is maintained. Evaluation of the quality of care is undertaken by the manager. Regular monitoring visits are undertaken by an independent person. This system has recently been made more rigorous and a former head teacher of the school has been appointed to undertake the visits.

Parents, Boarders and social workers know how to make a complaint. The residential provision has a complaints box where residential pupils can anonymously post any concerns or complaints. However, there have been no complaints made to the service. Comprehensive complaints procedures are in place. This ensures that if a complaint is made then it will be treated seriously and a full response given to the complainant.

There is full commitment from the manager and staff at the residential provision to driving forward constant improvement. At the previous inspection the manager was asked to further improve the furnishings and decoration in the residential provision. This has been achieved by re-decoration and the purchase of items such as new pictures and bedding. The residential provision's procedures for missing children have been reviewed and updated and is now compatible with the local Runaway and missing from home and care (RMFHC) protocols and procedures. The independent

visitor is now monitoring risk assessments and individual care plans for residential pupils.

National minimum standards

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

What should the school do to improve further?

- ensure that use of the hostel is exclusively reserved for the use of those children designated to use it
- Give consideration to replacing toilet flooring where it is damaged.

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.



05/11/2012

Dear young people who stay at the hostel,

Inspection of Mount Tamar Special School

Thank you for your help with this inspection. I really enjoyed speaking with you and learning about what you do when you stay at the hostel. I found that the hostel helps you to learn lots of new things, such as telling the time, cooking, good manners, and helping each other. I thought that the staff were very good at helping you when you got angry or too excited.

The activities like trampolining, swimming and going on holiday are very good and you said that you really enjoyed doing them. You said that you can choose what you did each evening. The food is very nice and I thought that there was a very good choice and plenty of it!

Staff are very good at keeping you safe and helping you to learn how to be safe. They care very much about you and want you to do well both at school and when you are out of school. They help you to make very good progress in all areas of your life.

You said that bullying doesn't happen at the hostel and you knew how to make a complaint. You thought that staff are very good at listening to you and helping you with anything.

The hostel looks nice, and staff have bought some nice pictures and bedding that has improved the bedrooms. There is plenty to do in the hostel, such as the computer, exercise bikes and books and games.

I have asked the staff at the hostel to make sure that the floor in the bathroom is repaired and that the hostel is only ever used by staff at the hostel or young people who are staying there.

Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Christina Maddison