

Shenstone Lodge 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

Shenstone Lodge School is a maintained residential special school catering for boys and girls with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties and children who display behaviour associated with the Autistic Spectrum. It offers education for pupils aged 5 to 11 years. The residential accommodation presently caters for boys only. Currently there are 25 pupils on roll, of which 7 are residential pupils. Boarding is predominantly offered four nights a week. There is a Key Stage 3 day transition unit which was established in September 2010.

The residential provision is situated in a large country house and is spread over three floors set in a four and a half acre site. The building has been extended in the past to provide staff rooms, offices, a medical room and resource areas. The purpose built school is detached from the residential facilities.

In April 2010 the school expanded to include secondary provision, at Brades Lodge, on a new site 12 miles away from Shenstone Lodge. The two sites function independently. The residential provision at Shenstone Lodge was last inspected 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	satisfactory
Outcomes for residential pupils	good
Quality of residential provision and care	good
Residential pupils' safety	satisfactory
Leadership and management of the residential provision	satisfactory

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is satisfactory.
- Being in residence enhances pupils' enjoyment of the school experience, enables them to develop a range of practical skills and be part of a sociable friendship group.
- Pupils are provided with a good quality of care to meet their individual needs in an inclusive and supportive environment.
- Pupils feel safe at the school, although the systems for reviewing behaviour documentation are weak. The school's arrangements for child protection are secure and the systems for recruitment and vetting are robust.
- Staffing arrangements ensure continuity of care. Pupils are happy with the care and support they receive. Parents and external professionals give high praise to the work of the school.
- A broad range of activities provides pupils with opportunities to keep physically active, develop social skills and build their confidence and self-esteem.
- There is adequate leadership and management of the residential provision. Although action was taken to address the two recommendations raised at the last inspection, these have not been sufficiently met. As a result, there is not an effective system for monitoring record-keeping documentation or policies. A new placement plan has been devised, but this has yet to be used in practice. This means work to ensure follow-up action and to support improvement in this area is not embedded.
- While governors visit the school, they are not monitoring it against all the matters

as required. This means that there is no independent oversight or monitoring to ensure development of practice.

- While there are some weaknesses against parts of the national minimum standards, these do not weaken the good quality of care and provision and have minimal impact on outcomes for pupils.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential pupils are good. Pupils positively benefit from their residential experience and the individual support they receive. Pupils speak highly of their residential experience and the positive impact this has on them as individuals. A pupil said, 'they have made me calmer.' Pupils also spoke passionately about the wide range of activities on offer, the positive relationships they have with staff and the support they receive in relation to managing their behaviour. Each of these aspects contribute to pupils making good progress in developing their self-esteem, social skills and emotional resilience and in turn contributes to their educational progress.

Pupils move in and on from the school because of well informed, sensitive staff support. The school has established effective preparation for pupils staying in residence for the first time. Care staff spend time with the pupil as well as actively consulting with previous school placements. Staff also work with parents to learn about the child's routines, as well as their likes and dislikes. As a result, when pupils sleep at the school they experience consistent care.

Pupils benefit from positive, nurturing relationships with male and female staff who provide good role models and consistent routines. Pupils' health and well-being is supported by an informed staff team and through effective partnerships with other professionals. Pupils report they feel particularly well cared for when feeling unwell or anxious. Pupils access a broad range of activities that helps to keep them physically active and develop new interests. For example, indoor manoeuvres where pupils hide within the residential provision and their peers have to find them.

Pupils feel listened to and supported to make their views known. There have been on-going changes to the menus and activities as an example. Pupils clearly enjoy boarding and this was echoed by a pupil who said, 'I feel safe and happy when I am here.' Most pupils exhibit tolerance, consideration and respect for others' behaviour whatever the difference in their circumstances. Pupils develop good social skills and are helped through their residential experience. They learn how to share, compromise and get on well with others from different backgrounds, cultures, ability and gender.

Comments from parents and external professionals in relation to the school are very positive and include: 'fantastic school, they listen to parents and involve us in decisions. We have seen our child develop as a result of being here.'

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of boarding provision and care is good. Admissions are planned and sensitively handled through effective procedures involving home visits and visits to the school. 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. Residential staff effectively provide for pupils' individual needs by offering pastoral support and practical personalised help that ensures the quality of care is good. Academic and residential staff work cooperatively to ensure good consistent support and behaviour management for pupils throughout the school day.

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. These practices provide pupils with a sense of belonging and self-worth. Pupils have their needs noted within child focused placement plans. These plans are limited in detail and do not overtly identify how the pupils needs will be met. Nonetheless, despite these weaknesses, outcomes for residential pupils are of good quality because of the experienced and passionate staff team.

Pupils' health and well-being are positively supported across the school community. The importance of a healthy lifestyle is promoted through the curriculum and reinforced by care staff. Health care plans are in place where appropriate and staff maintain effective links with specialist services supporting individual pupils. Medication is securely stored and administered by designated staff who have received appropriate training. Pupils are provided with healthy meals offering choice and variety. Menus take account of pupils' likes and dislikes and individual dietary needs are catered for. Meal times are very social occasions and are successful in encouraging the development of social skills and positive interaction between pupils.

Excellent on-site facilities, such as the gym and outside play area, exist for pupils to enjoy outside of the school day. Residential pupils are encouraged to participate in a broad range of interesting extra-curricular or leisure activities. These actively support good, inclusive personal development and improve individual socialisation.

Pupils are able to retain contact with their families and carers and can make and receive telephone calls in private. Support is provided where necessary. Staff maintain at least weekly contact with parents and carers to promote the well-being of pupils and to keep them informed of any issues and positive achievements.

The schools residential accommodation is of a good standard, safe and well maintained, so that pupils can feel warm and comfortable and keep their valuables and belongings secure. These residential areas support pupil learning and relaxation very well.

Residential pupils' safety

The school makes satisfactory provision to safeguard the welfare of residential pupils. 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. Senior management effectively instil the importance of safeguarding and protection of the vulnerable pupils looked after by the school. It

asserts this stance by maintaining a regular and positive relationship with the local statutory safeguarding services.

Effective site security is established by the use of security fencing and coded access. The frequency with which residential pupils can go missing is minimised by staff supervision and active management of the environment. Fire safety complies with regulatory requirements and pupils learn how to look after their own and other's safety by practising fire drills. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and pupils are aware of safety matters affecting them. For example, pupils demonstrate knowledge of the school boundary and appropriate use of play equipment. Premises are secure and residential accommodation is reserved for the use of pupils designated to use it. Pupils say they feel safe at school and confirm that there are many staff with whom they would be comfortable to talk if they needed and know about telephone help lines.

Pupils are effectively supported to develop appropriate behaviour through clear expectations, reflective discussions and consistency of approach. A pupil reinforced this as they said, 'I use to be naughty a lot. Now I am good a lot.' The school's behaviour system encourages and positively rewards good behaviour, achievement and being helpful. However, the record of physical interventions is not always completed to include the child's voice or to show examination by senior staff. Likewise, the system for review of behaviour documents is not effective as it is not consistently identifying if any patterns or trends are occurring. However, a new electronic system has been purchased by the school to help them combat this weakness.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The management and organisation of the residential provision is satisfactory. 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.

Well-established routines provide pupils with consistency and contribute to a safe, orderly atmosphere and supportive environment. Staffing arrangements are effectively managed and ensure there is sufficient staff on duty at all times to supervise residential pupils and support activities. All staff have access to good support, guidance and training which supports them in their role and systems are in place for the review of individual performance.

Monitoring by independent visitors is weak and ineffective. Although two visits to the school have been made by the governors, they have failed to sufficiently monitor against the required activities. Likewise the senior management monitoring and evaluation is not systematic and sufficiently robust to ensure development. However, the views of resident pupils are considered important and actively sought using formal and informal means of communication, such as key worker sessions and daily

group meetings. Pupils feel that their ideas are given due consideration and they can contribute to the running and improvement of their school including their residential houses. This enables them to feel valued and proud of their school.

National minimum standards

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.

- A written record is kept of major sanctions and the use of any physical intervention. Records may include the information in Appendix 2 (Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards) - 'use of physical restraint'. The record is made within 24 hours of the sanction being applied and is legible. Children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records. The school regularly reviews any instances of the use of physical intervention restraint and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice. (NMS 12.6)
- Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include: checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of physical interventions, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children; assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish). (NMS 20.2)
- The school produces a written placement plan, agreed as far as is practicable with the child, the child's parents/carers and any placing authority for the child, unless the information is held elsewhere such as in the child's statement of special educational needs. The placement plan identifies the needs of that child that the school should meet and specifies how the school will care for the child and promote their welfare on a day to day basis. Where significant changes are made to the placement plan there is appropriate consultation. Where applicable the plan is consistent with the care plan of the placing authority for any child placed by a local authority. The placement plan is regularly reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect significant changes in the child's needs or progress in his or her development. Where feasible children in the school are aware of the content of their placement plans, and confirm that the school is providing care for them that is consistent with the plans. (NMS 21.1)
- The records specified in Appendix 2 (Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards) are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate. (NMS 13.3)

What should the school do to improve further?

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.



28/11/2012

Dear pupils

Inspection of Shenstone Lodge School

I recently visited your school to do an inspection and was fortunate enough to spend time with you. Thank you for showing me around, allowing me to have tea with you and talking to me about what it is like living at the school during the week.

You told me that you liked being at school with your friends and that there was lots to do all the time so you didn't get bored. You said that the staff were really good and looked after you very well by helping you with personal needs such as medication. They help you develop social skills like keeping your things tidy and helping with the house chores. Generally you told me that being resident was good fun and the rules were okay.

I saw that some of the school paperwork is not as good as it should be and I have asked for the governors to become more active and visit residence more. I have also asked for the school to introduce some minor improvements to the way it records important tasks that confirm it is obeying the rules set for schools.

Overall I think your school is nice; it is caring and supportive of you by helping you to make lots of progress that will be really useful as you get older.

Thank you for making me feel welcome

Yours sincerely,

Jackie Callaghan