

Pield Heath 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

Pield Heath School is a non-maintained day and residential special school for boys and girls between the ages of seven and 19 years who have complex needs, moderate to severe learning difficulties and associated communication problems. St Joseph's, the residential accommodation, is available from Monday to Thursday in addition to overnight short break care. This provision is available for students of either gender from age 14 to 19. Currently three students reside at the school and an additional 13 use the service for short breaks. Accommodation is provided in one house located on the school site. The school was founded by the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus of Mary and they remain the trustees. A convent and nursing home are also located in the grounds of the school in Uxbridge, Middlesex. The school was last inspected in February 2012.

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 Pield Heath School is outstanding. The school provides an exceptional boarding experience to residential students. Staff are committed to the development of students. This is achieved through consistency of approach to reach achievable outcomes and excellent communication between all parties involved in students' care.
- The safeguarding of students is outstanding. All safeguarding matters are dealt with in a thoughtful way putting students firmly at the centre of what the school does. Excellent procedures and practice in recruitment, health and safety and safeguarding support this ethos to ensure that all aspects of student's safety are fully addressed.
- Students benefit from excellent, detailed assessment, care planning and delivery. Staff ensure that support is highly individualised and that students are actively encouraged to make choices in all aspects of care, support and entertainment. Students increase their life skills; this has a very positive impact on their families, decreases dependency and makes real the prospect of students becoming more independent in their adult lives.
- The residential provision at Pield Heath School is extremely well managed and organised. This head of care pays attention to detail and has with the staff team, created an environment that gives assistance to families, consistency of approach to students and clarity to staff. The atmosphere enables students to develop in a safe, nurturing setting.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the outstanding quality of residential provision in the school. One parent stated, 'I am more than happy with the way

they manage my child. I know we are extremely lucky to have a place here. They treat the students like young adults and they are an integral part of their development and transition into adulthood.'

- The monitoring and review of practice enables staff to develop the service to suit the changing needs of students. Students and their parent's needs are understood and their views really listened to. Staff work over and above what is expected of them to give students many opportunities that will enhance their lives now and in the future.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential students are outstanding. One parent said, 'It is a wonderful place, we feel very much supported by the school.'

Residential students make decisions about many things during their stay. This is expected of them. Students develop the confidence to question staff about any aspects of their day or activity they do not understand or agree with.

Students are extremely happy. They are comfortable in their environment which is a good mix of fun, energy and calm.

Students are very well behaved; they develop respectful relationships with staff, listen to directions and are kindly reminded of appropriate behaviour and the targets they are working towards. One parent said, 'The school feels warm, the pastoral side is fantastic, it is the atmosphere and the caring that does it.'

Students look forward to overnight stays at St Joseph's. This is an opportunity to spend time with their peers and participate in the wide ranging activities and trips organised for them. Residential and extended school activities such as art, youth clubs and Tai Chi are popular with students. Off-site activities take place on a weekly basis and encourage wider socialisation for students. One student stated, 'I like being with my friends and going to youth club.'

Residential students significantly increase their independent living skills. All aspects of independence are addressed, from students improving their communication through speech and language therapy and signing to managing their personal care independently. These tasks are done in a sensitive way so that students do not consider their participation to be an extension of the school day and formal learning. One parent said, 'I see a big difference in my child even from last year, my child is no longer frightened he has calmed down.'

Residential students are exceptionally well prepared for moving on from the school. The consultation undertaken with students allows them to make clear their wishes

for the future and enables staff to advocate on their behalf.

Students leave the school with improved education and accommodation choices; this is achieved through the excellent programme of improving all independent living skills such as travelling independently, shopping, cooking, and time-keeping and personal care skills.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of residential provision and care is outstanding. One parent said, 'I am fussy, here they are great, they provide for the individual's needs and they do this very well.'

There is highly effective communication between residential staff, parents and the school. Students benefit from assessments that incorporate their emotional, social and physical capabilities; these guide the provision to explore if they can meet the presenting needs. Parents visit St Joseph's and receive written information about what they can expect. Students welcome packs are pictorial and introduce students to the prospect of overnight stays in a reassuring way. Residential students have 'tea visits' to familiarise themselves with the new environment; staff observe their interactions and behaviour until it is agreed that they are ready to stay overnight. Students are able to make contact with their parents during their stay if they wish to. One parent said, 'Our child has never contacted us in all the years he has stayed there, he has never needed to, he feels very comfortable there.'

Students arrive at school by transport with an escort. The communication between drivers, escorts and the students is excellent. This is due to the school providing sign language training for escorts and drivers. This increases the opportunity students have to communicate with people that they see regularly and enables a more informative handover to staff at the start, and end of a school day. Important information is promptly shared to help manage and support students who may be upset or anxious.

All activities provided are purposeful. These aim to increase skills in communication, coordination, socialisation and independence as well as provide some relaxation. Students enjoy helping to cook their evening meal, singing, exercising and playing a variety of games with staff and one another. One parent said, 'My child loves it, he is able to pack his overnight bag, he goes to youth club. He gets the company and socialisation that I cannot provide and feels a great sense of belonging somewhere other than at home.'

Medical support is provided within the school by a dedicated and skilled school nurse. Permission for medical administration and treatments are in place. The receipt, storage and administration of medication within the school and St Joseph's are very robust. Medication practice is monitored by the head of care and the school nurse. Residential students have 'patient passports' in place, implemented by the nurse.

These are an accurate record of all pertinent information that can be used in emergency situations. This prevents any unnecessary delay in treatment or support to students.

The role of the nurse includes ensuring staff are trained in areas such as epilepsy management, asthma care and the use of adrenalin pens. The school nurse is well connected with community nursing services and shares good practice with them and external organisations for the benefit of the students within the school. The nurse also offers very good practical support to parents, for example with dental and optical appointments and immunisations. This ensures that all primary health needs of students are fully met. One parent stated, 'They are very careful with medication. The nurse has also stayed with us in hospital when our child was admitted. This helped us a great deal.'

This Roman Catholic school fully embraces the diversity of students and the staff team, who add to the richness of the experiences that are on offer in the school. Any attitudes or behaviours which compromise this are addressed ensuring clear messages are given about acceptable language and behaviour. Staff respect and fulfil individual religious and cultural practice. The ethos of the school is inclusivity regardless of difference. All students and parents may opt out of religious services and practice without any impact on the care and support received within the school community.

Students have comprehensive care plans which specify student's skills and abilities and areas for development. Formulated in partnership with parents and school professionals, the life skills programme tracks student's development well. These explicitly detail the success criteria and when this has been achieved. Students are fully involved in setting targets for their life skills programme. They are provided with step-by-step pictorial images detailing how they will achieve these. Daily logs record their progress, for example, if they hang-up clothes correctly. Pictures of their actions are also taken to help demonstrate their abilities. This is visually beneficial to students but also to provisions they may be moving on to. One parent said, 'They help my child make the first steps towards independent supported living, they give lots of positive endorsements to empower her to independence.' Personal, group and public praise and rewards are given to students. These are effective in inspiring students to do well as individuals and as a group.

Good effort is made to vary menus. School menus are available to ensure there is not a duplication of meals. Students contribute a great deal to the menus and are directed to consider healthy options. In some cases there is duplication on the residential menu that mainly affects those students who board full time.

Residential students stay in a warm, comfortable and relaxing environment. The home is clearly 'theirs' with personalised items in bedrooms and pictures of students in the hall and dining area. Students have access to good bathing and shower facilities that provide appropriate privacy.

Residential pupils' safety

The school makes outstanding provision to keep residential students safe. One parent said, 'I know my child is safe here, I trust them.' Pield Heath has two designated senior persons responsible for safeguarding students - the headteacher and the school nurse. All staff are aware of the designated persons' role and report any concerns or allegations immediately. The robust child protection policy and procedure is underpinned by excellent knowledge and training provided to the designated officers and the school community. Designated senior persons make good use of external support. One senior education officer confirmed, 'They are very thorough in their dealings with child protection issues and attend a whole host of safeguarding training.'

Staff relationships with parents are excellent. This means that where issues have arisen, families understand that the priority of the staff is to keep students safe. Designated senior persons attend and contribute to strategy and professionals meetings as appropriate. Good examples given by the designated senior person demonstrates that relationships with family members are maintained at difficult times. This reduces the risk of non-attendance at school and the school can continue to offer students a safe environment.

The safety of students is further promoted through high quality health and safety practice. Staff receive relevant health and safety training and have an excellent understanding of their responsibilities. All risk assessments are carefully put together and reviewed. Any maintenance issues are swiftly resolved through in-house staff and external contactors.

Students feel safe and are safe in the residential setting. Students participate in fire drills and know the designated assembly points. Staff recruitment is meticulous; only thoroughly checked staff are employed to work with students. The staff team is stable and there have not been any new employees since the previous inspection, providing students with continuity of care. All staff receive an induction and training relevant to their duties including fire training, first aid and physical intervention.

Risk assessments are in place for all students. The assessments inform staff of how to manage and plan to minimise risks to student's well-being. The assessments do not hinder student's opportunities to explore new activities or experiences despite the challenges this may bring. Where necessary, students have detailed individual behaviour support plans. The strategies to manage behaviour are known by all staff and implemented consistently, giving clear yet reassuring support to students. This results in students behaving very well within the school. They are polite, well-mannered and able to express their feelings and frustrations to staff knowing that they will be listened to and supported to manage their feelings in an acceptable way.

High quality records are kept of incidents, with detailed breakdowns to allow analysis

of the incidents, people involved and effectiveness of behaviour support plans. Physical intervention has not been used in St Joseph's. Staff provide practical advice and guidance to families to help them manage the behaviour of their children. Some of the behaviours that challenge parents are not displayed in the school or residential setting. One parent said, 'I see a big difference in my child even from last year. My child is no longer frightened he has calmed down.'

High levels of staffing, role modelling, pen discussions and good planning result in bullying not featuring in the school. Students are taught from the outset that being kind to one another is important to help make a happy environment. Notices and cards on walls throughout the residential setting advise students of who they can talk to if they are worried or upset. Colourful posters remind students what the school does and does not do, giving clear messages about attitudes and behaviour.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The leadership and management of the residential provision are outstanding. Practice within the residential provision echoes the aims and objectives of the school. This enables staff to develop the knowledge and understanding of each student and deploy flexible approaches according to students' needs. The residential staff team ensures that the provision focuses on the development, safety and welfare of students.

Relationships with school staff are strong. Regular link meetings bring all parties together to discuss the development of students and plan how they will move forward. Where necessary, additional support is put in place to boost the improvements made by students. The relevant professional will provide the support directly or advise the staff on how this can be delivered. One parent said, 'We mimic strategies in school that aid independence.' There are plans in place with school staff to provide summer and half-term activities to students to further reduce isolation and provide stimulating pursuits. In addition, residential and school staff volunteer to accompany students as a group on special activities during some weekends. Commendably, staff give their own time to allow students to have a positive experience that their parents may not be in a position to facilitate. One social worker stated, 'The school has been excellent, the young person has progressed in relation to their social skills. Their personal care and general well-being has improved; this is a great change when you look at their history.' One parent said, 'They make sure they have the same communication strategies in residential as in the school. This is excellent for my child's speech.'

All staff take on shift-leading roles to develop their confidence in leading the team and taking responsibility. This is highly effective in sharing responsibility and enabling students to have confidence in all staff managing their daily activities. The head of care supports all staff members through individual supervision, team meetings and daily communication. Staff receive training relevant to their role and recognise the value of continuous learning for the benefit of students.

Team meetings are used to good effect to update staff and highlight areas of practice that are good or can be improved. Ideas about further developing students holistically are explored and implemented. This includes an increase in relaxation techniques, physical exercise and activities to develop fine and gross motor skills.

Students' views are always considered during staff meetings. Meetings are also used to discuss the results of fortnightly consultations with students. The consultations take a week to complete to ensure that the views of all students using the service on different evenings are represented. Any decision and action taken as a result of their opinions is clearly recorded with the completion date and the feedback to students. All communication with students is produced in formats they understand.

Consultation documents produced by St Joseph's which aid social workers communication with students is of a very high standard. In addition staff members fluent in sign language assist external visitors to converse with students and seek their opinions.

Residential students' case records are of a very high standard. They give a very good picture of students' development during their time at St Joseph's. Students have an additional file of their progress in pictures, including their certificates of achievements and any qualifications they reach. This record is created for them to keep of their time in St Joseph's.

National minimum standards

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

What should the school do to improve further?

- ensure closer scrutiny of residential menus to avoid repetition, with particular reference to full-time students.

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.



03/12/2012

Dear Students,

Inspection of Pield Heath School

Thank you so much for allowing me to spend time with you, getting involved in your activities and letting me know what it is like to spend time there.

I believe that the staff do a brilliant job looking after you and making sure that you are safe and happy. They really care about you and talk to your parents and other school staff to make sure everyone looks after you in the same way.

The staff make sure you have plenty of activities to keep you entertained and also help you to learn to be more independent.

Your parents and staff tell me that you are able to unpack your bags when you come to stay, help with cooking, setting the table for dinner, and many other targets as well as pass messages on to other staff when asked. I saw you do a number of these myself. This is all really good for you to learn and I notice that you like getting positive leaves when you have done well.

Staff help you understand that it is important to be kind to each other and that you have to respect other peoples feelings and personal space. You make friend when you are at St Josephs and you all get along well. Your house is big and cosy with plenty of space for you to move around.

I really enjoyed the art club and could see that you enjoyed this too. I also thought that the production of Noah's ark was excellent. Seeing you all sing and sign was wonderful.

I really enjoyed visiting you all and I wish you the best.

Yours sincerely,

Tola Akinde-Hummel

