

Unsted Park 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

Unsted Park is a residential special school for boys and girls aged 11 to 19 years. The school provides day and residential provision for students with Asperger's syndrome. Residential placements are provided in four boarding houses. The residential provision was last inspected in September 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	good
Outcomes for residential pupils	outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	outstanding
Residential pupils' safety	good
Leadership and management of the residential provision	good

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of the boarding provision is good but there are outstanding aspects. The quality of the boarding provisions has a positive impact on the development and progress of boarders. This includes social, cultural and education progress. The strength of the relationships between boarders and staff is at the heart of this and provides boarders with effective support in meeting their individual needs. Staff are proactive at developing positive behavioural strategies for individual boarders which is evident in the improvements in boarders behaviours. The rewards programme is linked to the boarder's individual behaviour programme which is developed with input from the boarders. The boarding accommodation is of a good standard providing boarders with a comfortable and relaxed environment in which to live. Boarder's safety is protected with robust systems of risk assessments, recruitment and health and safety procedures. However the oversight in renewing the gas safety check and supporting certificate could compromise boarder's safety. The boarders are care for by a very committed and well trained staff team. The supervision and appraisal of staff has improved but the quality of these sessions is not consistent. Currently the internal quality monitoring reports do not cover all the documents required and there is a lack of consistent evidence that these and other records have been monitored. A number of the school policies are in need of review to ensure they reflect current legislation and practice. The school is an inclusive environment which celebrates the individual and provides them with good opportunities for growth and development.

Outcomes for residential pupils

The relationships between the boarders and the staff are excellent and are a major strength of the school. Young people are very positive about the staff who look after them. They said 'Staff are kind, fun to be with and look after us well.' Young people said that since they have been at the school they had been given help to understand their condition. The school is an inclusive community where people support one another and feel safe. Boarders develop self-confidence and build their self-esteem. Social interaction for a number of the boarders has been an issue but living in this nurturing environment enables them to develop their social skill in a safe non-judgemental environment. Boarders said they feel valued and their individuality is seen as a positive not a negative.

Boarders said that the boarding aspect of the school is comfortable and relaxed. They are proud of their houses and their individual rooms. They said there are 'loads' of different activities and events they can take part in and they are involved in developing the activity schedule. They feel listened too and said that staff welcome and value their input into the boarding life. There are various methods by which boarders can make their views/ideas known and were able to provide a lot of examples where this has happened. Boarders felt the school council was very effective and the members take their role very seriously.

The behaviour of boarders is good. This can be linked to the high quality of the individual work the school undertakes with boarders and also the focus on positive interventions in their behaviours. This enables boarders to develop techniques so they can manage their own behaviours.

Boarders are involved in a robust life skills programme which helps to prepare them for moving on to the next stage of their lives. Boarders said they enjoyed this programme especially the budgeting and preparation of meals that they did with staff and each other. They said this has helped them feel more confident and also help with their social interaction. This includes them working with staff on following a healthy life style including emotional and physical good health. Boarders said the school was a great place to live and would recommend the school.

Quality of residential provision and care

There is excellent pastoral support for the boarders which include exceptional individual plans. The care plan format has been reviewed since the last inspection and is now even more detailed. These plans include targets and are reviewed and updated, with the boarders' involvement, on a regular basis. They are also linked to the schools merit system which reinforces positive behaviours. Individual plans are effectively implemented by a very dedicated and child centred care team. Each boarder has an identified key worker who meets with them on a regular basis. This relationship is seen as very important by the boarders and they enjoy their time with

their keyworkers. Records of key worker sessions are mostly of an outstanding quality. However, a number of records do not demonstrate that key workers have a clear awareness of the individual needs and goals of the young people as specified in their care plan. There is excellent communication between the care team and education team to ensure a holistic approach to the boarders care. Linked to these plans are individual behaviour plans which include detailed strategies for safe holding.

The induction of new boarders is well managed with introductory visits and assessment days. This includes an overnight stay in boarding for prospective boarders.

Boarders have access to a very range of activities and have input into the development of the activity programme. Boarders said they enjoyed these and that they like the activities and that staff listened to their suggestion and where possible acted on these.

The promotion of boarder's health is outstanding. There are excellent systems for the recording, storage, administration and disposal of medication which are robustly monitored. This ensures that any discrepancies are quickly addressed. Staff are only able to administer medication once they have received training on how to do so. When medication is administered this is always done in private with a second member of staff witnessing. Work is also undertaken with the boarders on healthy diets, sexual health, drug and substance abuse. These issues are also covered in personal, social and health education lessons. In the boarding house there is excellent information on health issues as well as an 'awareness board' which provides information on a number of conditions such as Asperger's, cerebral palsy, and dyspraxia.

Boarders are able to access a number of therapies at the school which include speech and language, anger management, occupational health and a counsellor. There was clear evidence of the school working closely with children and adolescent mental health services as well as mental health services within the Priory group.

Catering is of a good standard and provides the young people with a variety of healthy nutritious meals. The chef is very aware of the boarders' dietary needs including allergies, intolerances and religious beliefs. The menus are on a four week rolling basis and the chef emails these each week to the parents of the young people with food issues for their view/input. This is exceptional practice. Boarders in the sixth form prepare their own meals with staff input which is tailored to their ability and progress. Boarders were positive about the food and said they had input with the menus. This is done through the school council, boarding meetings and by chatting to the chef. There is an excellent training programme in place for all those involved in food preparation and the environmental health office awarded the school five stars on their last inspection.

Boarders are able to contact their parents privately and are also able to use the schools office phones. Staff have duty mobiles so that parents are able to contact staff as required. The school operates a home school book which aids communication with parents as well as frequent phone and email contact. These systems ensure a very good level of communication and consistency of care between the school and home. Staff have recently developed a parental forum to enhance the involvement of parents within the school.

Boarders live in well maintained, comfortable accommodation. Bedrooms and communal areas are decorated to a good standard and boarders are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms. All of the bedrooms are single occupancy with those on the second floor having en-suite bathrooms. On this floor there is also a well equipped kitchen/dining/lounge area and a kitchen on the first floor which young people can access. There is a calm room located within the boarding environment which can be accessed by the whole school. Boarders did say they would like this to be relocated in another part of the school not the boarding area as this is accessed by non-boarders. They have raised this with staff and it is being discussed. The school grounds are exceptional and provide young people with ample external safe space to use.

Residential pupils' safety

There are robust risk assessments and health and safety processes which protect young people from harm. The risk assessments are very detailed and include risk assessments for the environment, manual lifting, activities, and each boarder. All are frequently reviewed and updated as required.

Records of fire drills and fire safety records are excellent and much improved since the last inspection. This ensure boarders and staff are protected in the event of fire. Where required, boarders have individual evacuation plans, which are frequently reviewed and updated. All staff undertake fire awareness training on a regular basis. Staff and young people demonstrated clear knowledge on fire procedures. Briefings are given to visitors on arrival. Other health and safety aspects are well managed. However the gas safety certificate expired in October 2012. This certificate clearly states that it must be renewed within the twelve month period. There was evidence of this being requested prior to the expiry date and limited evidence of it being chased. This has now been scheduled. This oversight potentially places the boarders at risk.

Excellent safe guarding policy and procedures are in place. Training in safe guarding is also outstanding and is delivered to all staff. The designated safeguarding officer has undertaken additional training and has good links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Staff demonstrated excellent knowledge in this area.

The behaviour management system at the school is outstanding. Boarders have individual behaviour plans which operate on a traffic light system and clearly identify

triggers and strategies for addressing these. They also include work with the boarders on them developing the skills to control their own behaviour. The main focus on behaviour management is on reinforcement of positive behaviours. The rewards system has been reviewed to be more clearly linked with the individual boarder's care plan. All staff are trained in safe holding methods. This training focuses on de-escalation, identifying triggers and positive intervention strategies. This approach is supported by a monitoring system which allows the school to clearly identify the number of restraints boarders and staff have been involved in. Staff involved in a high numbers of restraints are monitored and are offered a review of their practice. Key staff such as restraint trainers and the head of care have their practice regularly monitored by senior management.

Records are kept of all restraints. De-brief sessions are held with all young people and staff; this process has recently been reviewed and improved. Since the last inspection there has been a significant drop in the number of restraints. Records of restraints have been reviewed since the last inspection. The use of the calm room is also closely monitored. Clear guidance has been developed for its use and records are maintained.

Boarders are very clear on the school rules and said that the sanctions given are fair and consistent. Boarders do not see bullying as an issue at the school. The anti-bullying policy has been reviewed and updated in light of a recent visit from Ofsted. This now reflects the latest guidance. Incidents of bullying are now clearly assessed and reviewed in order to inform and develop better practice. Young people have developed a very useful leaflet on bullying outlining the forms it can take and how and where to get help.

There is a very robust recruitment and vetting procedure in place to safeguard boarders, which is adhered to in practice.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The school has an appropriate Statement of Purpose which contains all the required information. The boarders guide is informative and written in a child-friendly manner.

There is clear leadership and management at the school. The new principal has been in post since January this year and the acting head of care has been confirmed in post. These people along with the head teacher are well regarded by the staff team who speak very positively about them. The head of care is particularly valued by the staff team. Links between the academic and residential sides of the school are strong and benefit from daily handover meetings. This approach ensures that relevant information is shared and boarders receive consistent care. Residential staff also provide support during the education day as required.

Since the last inspection the school has changed its staffing structure. Previously all care staff worked alternate weeks in care and education. This has now stopped and

care staff now primarily work in the boarding area but do on occasions provide additional support in education. This was done to improve the consistency of care the boarders receive. Prior to this change full consultation was carried out including boarders. Boarders are very positive about the change as they get to spend more social time with the care staff in particular their key workers.

Staff to young people ratios are very high. These high levels of staff enable the young people to receive high levels of individual support from the staff team. The staff team is of mixed age, gender and cultural backgrounds. They are very young person focused and the majority of the team are very experienced in working with young people. Those staff who are new to the school and/or have little experience of residential work are not left in roles of responsibility until they have completed their probationary period and have been assessed as having the appropriate experience to take on such duties. There are clear systems in place for suitably experienced staff to deputise in the absence of the head of care. Continuity of staffing is key for young people with Autism and Aspersers and the staff team are very committed to providing this. Thus staff absences are covered mainly by the care team but also some of the teaching staff will take on duties in the residential setting if required.

The school's 'absent without authority' protocols are compatible with the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols. All staff receive training on these as part of their probationary period and this is also regularly updated.

Boarders do not experience discrimination. The school is very proactive at celebrating the individual including those with disabilities and of a different race or culture. Included in this approach is work with the boarders on the discrimination they may possibly experience and working with them on strategies to cope with this. Various projects have taken place in the school celebrating different cultures and gender issues.

The school is very proactive in securing the views of the pupils. There are various avenues for this which includes a school council, boarders meetings, surveys, suggestion boxes as well as key workers sessions. There is also an email system where boarders can raise issues or ask for support from the 'Unsted friend'. The boarders said that the current systems for consultation were effective but they also said they were happy to 'just go and talk to staff'. They feel their views are valued and where possible acted upon if not they are given a full explanation as to why.

There is a clear system for addressing complaints made about all aspects of the school. Information on this is provided for boarders and their parents at the point of admission, is in the boarders guide and on the notice boards. Boarders said they knew how to make and complaint and felt confident that any concerns they might raise would be listened to and addressed. There have been no complaints about the boarding aspect of the school since the last inspection.

The school has an excellent training programme for the staff team. The main basis

for this is an on-line training system provide by the provider. This is enhance by staff attending training provide by external trainers including the local authority. All of the therapists working at the school have the required qualifications and registrations with the appropriate bodies.

The formal supervision of staff has improved since the last inspection. Staff are now receiving supervision at the required intervals. However the quality of the records of these sessions is not consistent. There is a lack of consistent evidence of boarders being discussed and some records contained very limited information on any aspect of staffs' work. Appraisals like supervisions are happening at the required intervals but these too lack consistency and detail. The staff team have regular team meetings as well as daily briefing handovers.

A significant number of the school policies are in need of review and/or update. A number of these refer to the old national minimum standards which were updated in 2011. Policies on safeguarding, behaviour management, fire, health and safety, bullying, staffing, homely medication, visitors and working with parents and carers are up to date.

The provider has a representative which visits the school mostly every half term however most of these visits are announced. The principal said this process has been reviewed and in the New Year all visits will be unannounced. These visits and subsequent reports do not cover the monitoring of all records as detailed in Appendix 2 of the national minimum standards and they lack consistent evaluation of the work undertaken by the school. These records are currently not being monitored by the school's management.

Every young person has an accurate, permanent record of their history and progress at the school which contains all the required information. This is securely stored.

National minimum standards

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

- The school has regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State 'Health and Safety: Department for Education Advice on Legal Duties and Powers for Local Authorities, Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies' (as referenced in 'Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards'). (NMS 6.2)
- 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)

What should the school do to improve further?

- ensure each child has at least one key worker within the school who provides individual guidance and support to the child. In particular records of these sessions are consistent and work is linked to the child's individual needs and goals. NMS 21.2
- ensure records specified in Appendix are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate. NMS 13.3
- ensure all staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervisions and formal annual appraisal of their performance. In particular the quality of the records of supervisions and appraisals is consistent and include reference to their work with the young people. NMS 19.6
- ensure all policies and procedures are reviewed and where needed updated to reflect current legislation, National Minimum Standards and practice. NMS 13

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.



06/12/2012

Inspection of Unsted Park School

Yours sincerely,

Wendy Anderson