

Notton House School

Notton School House, 28 Notton, Lacock, CHIPPENHAM, Wiltshire, SN15 2NF

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| Inspection dates | 21/03/2013 | |
| Overall effectiveness | Adequate | 3 |
| Outcomes for residential pupils | Good | 2 |
| Quality of residential provision and care | Adequate | 3 |
| Residential pupils' safety | Adequate | 3 |
| Leadership and management of the residential provision | Adequate | 3 |

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is adequate because

- Pupils have very good constructive relationships with the staff who care for them especially their key workers. Pupils are very positive about the care they receive.
- Pupils individual needs are identified and met. Care plans are regularly reviewed but the target that are set for individual pupils are not robustly linked to their identified needs or robustly reviewed and updated.
- Pupils are cared for by a stable well trained staff team. However communication including information sharing between the care staff, education staff and senior management could improve to provide more consistent care for the pupils.
- Safeguarding policies and procedure in relation to bullying, behaviour management, missing pupils and recruitment are adequate. However the school has failed to promptly refer a safeguarding concern to the local designated officer.
- The number of restraints in this inspection period have decreased and records of these incidents have improved. These do still not contain enough information to allow robust monitoring.
- Pupils are provided with a wide range of activities which help them to develop self-esteem, and keep fit.
- Pastoral care is strong with pupils benefiting from good emotionally support. Pupils are empowered to develop strategies to control their behaviours.
- The monitoring systems within the school lack rigour and thus to not effectively enable its development.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools. The

details are listed in the full report.

Information about this inspection

The school was given twenty four hours notice of this inspection. All of the residential accommodation was visited, meals were taken with the pupils, and formal meetings took place with some of the residential pupils. Other residential pupils were spoken too during activities and over meals. Meetings took place with key care staff including the head teacher, the deputy head of care, team leaders and care staff. There were no responses from Parent View or Ofsted care staff surveys. Telephone feedback was obtained from external professionals and evaluated.

Inspection team

Wendy Anderson

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Notton House School is a maintained residential special school for 60 boys aged 9-16 years. Currently 25 pupils reside at the school during term time. The residential accommodation is provided in seven houses on the first and second floors of the main school building. The school is situated in a rural area of Wiltshire, and caters for young people with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. All young people referred to the school have a statement of special educational needs. An increasing number of students have additional learning difficulties, including attention deficit disorder, autistic spectrum disorders and communication and learning difficulties. The school is owned and operated by Bristol City Council.

The residential provision was last inspected in January 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- ensure that pupils individual goals are linked to their identified needs and that these goals are regularly reviewed and updated. Where a goal has not been reached an evaluation of the work undertaken to achieve this goals should be undertaken.
- ensure that the monitoring reports from the member of the governing body are robust and detailed within these reports is improved.
- ensure there are effective communication systems between staff from all aspect of the school campus, including therapist.
- ensure that the policies for child protection and whistleblowing are reviewed and up dated.
- ensure the training schedule for the staff team is reviewed to include further input regarding the more complex needs of the pupils they care for
- The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.
 - The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (as referenced in 'Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards'). (NMS 11)
 - The school has, and implements, appropriate policies for the care of children who are unwell. These include first aid, care of those with chronic conditions and disabilities, administration of medicines and dealing with medical emergencies. (NMS 3.6)
 - 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)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Good

Outcomes for residential pupils are good. Pupils enjoy very positive relationship with the staff who care for them. These relationships are based on respect and trust. Pupils particularly value their relationships with their key workers. Pupils live in an inclusive community which they feel safe, happy and relaxed. Pupils are very proud of their individual residential units and all those spoken too said they would recommend their school to others. Pupils enjoy their time at the school and many take advantage of the schools open weekends.

Pupils develop positive strategies to manage their own behaviour, social skills and tolerance of others. This gives the pupils a good grounding for later life and living in the wider community. Pupils really like the schools points system that enables their positive development. One pupil said, 'it's the first time I've been praised for anything', another said, 'I like the awards given at meetings for being good'. Another pupil said 'when you see other doing well you want to do well too'.

Pupils make good progress, from their starting point, both educationally and developing as a person. Pupils self-worth and self-esteem is increased as staff value their input in to all aspects of their care and the day to day life of the school.

Pupils develop empathy and to support each other. One pupil said that on their arrival at the school the older pupils were very helpful and kind to them; this made settling in easier. Another pupil said, 'we can help each other as some of us have been through similar experiences. Once we understand what's going on for ourselves we can then help other pupils understand what's going on for them.'

Pupils develop an understanding of the needs of others, take part in community based initiatives such as dog walking and charity work. This linked with the Asdan programme enhances pupils interaction and understanding of the wider community and help with their preparation for life after school.

Quality of residential provision and care

Adequate

The quality of residential provision is adequate. Residential pupils receive pastoral care from a committed team of experienced care, therapy and support staff. Pupils receive regular key working sessions and have an allocated key worker responsible for monitoring their care and progress. However these keyworker sessions are not consistently linked to the pupils identified needs or goals. Pupil's value the relationships they have with their keyworkers but they also feel able to go to any staff who care for them for guidance or support. The school's independent listener regularly visits the school to meet the pupils. This enables them to promote their role and remind pupils there is an external support contact they can access. Contact details of this person is displayed on notice board throughout the school.

There is a well-planned induction process for pupils. Prospective pupils and their families are visited at home or their current placement. After this visits to the school are planned. This process staff feel can help the young person with the stress of the transition and helps elevate the fear of moving to the unknown. Pupils said they found this approach helpful. There is also a welcome booklet which provides good information of life at the school.

Care staff support pupils throughout the educational day. This has been very positive for the pupils as the care staff have an in-depth understanding of the pupils emotional needs and triggers. However staff said that this has had a negative effect of the time they have to complete

administration tasks, planning and reports. Care and education staff work together to set and review pupils' plans and targets. Despite the use of daily handovers between the care and the education staff care staff there is not good consistent communication between these two areas of the school. There is also a lack of communication between the schools therapist and the care staff. These shortfalls mean the pupils do not receive consistently good quality care from the adults who care for them.

All statutory reviews take place at the required intervals. Care staff enable pupils not only to take part in these meetings but in preparing them for the meeting. The review of pupils residential plans is not robust. This can lead to targets remaining the same for in some cases up to a year with no evidence of progress or review of the approaches used.

Positive reinforcement is a key aspect of the school. Pupils achievements are celebrated with awards for academic, behavioural, and social achievements. Pupils like this approach. One said 'it's great when everyone knows how well you have done'.

The school provides the pupils with a wide range of activities. Pupils views are sought on what activities they would like to take part in or would like the staff to arrange. These enable the pupils not only to expand their experiences but to develop social skills and a sense of achievement as well as with some activities physical fitness. Pupils also take part in activities in the local community as well as accessing those on the school campus including its extensive grounds.

The school has robust systems for consulting with its pupils. This is done at various levels, keyworker sessions, surveys and the school council. The school council represents all pupil groups across the school campus. The minutes of these meeting provide evidence of the input and effect this student body has had in the day to day running and the development of the school. Pupils have confidence in their council to put the pupils views across and report back to them.

Health care arrangement at the school are appropriate. Pupils are provided with good information and guidance on leading a healthy life style. Linked to this are the personal social and health education lessons which include work on drugs, alcohol and smoking as well as sexual health issues. Pupils also have access to the school's occupational therapist and emotional literacy coordinator. Care staff receive training in first aid and the safe handling of medication. However records of the administration of medication are not consistent; there were several gaps in the recording of prescribed medication. This inconsistency could lead to a pupil not receiving the medication they require. There are very good systems in place for dealing with those pupils who suffer from encopresis. This is handled very sensitively by the staff team.

The school has very good catering arrangements for the pupils. Meals provided are varied, nutritious and healthy. Pupils spoke positively about the food provided saying there is plenty of choice and portion size is good. All identified dietary needs are catered for.

Accommodation at the school is comfortable and well maintained. Pupils are proud of their bedrooms and their individual units. This provides pupils with a homely environment in which to develop and grow. Throughout the accommodation there are photos celebrating activities and events the pupils have taken part in.

All pupils have ready access to a telephone and are able to contact their family and friends.

Residential pupils' safety

Adequate

The safety of residential pupils is adequate. The pupils at the school said that they felt safe and well looked after by the care staff.

The school has clear safeguarding procedures in place to protect pupils but these are not consistently followed. This lack of consistency could potentially place pupils at risk. This shortfall particularly applies when a concern is referred to the local authority designated officer (LADO). This was raised in the last inspection report. In this inspection period the school has made referrals to the LADO but failed to do this on one occasion. On this occasion the school again carried out an investigation prior to informing the LADO. This is not in line with current child protection procedures.

Care staff receive regular training in safeguarding and demonstrated a clear understanding of this issue. Recruitment and vetting systems are robust and adhered to which protect pupils from unsuitable persons. Those staff who recruit staff have undertaken the safer recruitment training.

Behaviour management at the school is based upon positive reinforcement and the pupils reflecting on the behaviours and the effects this has on themselves and others. This is done through emotional literacy and key worker sessions. This approach helps the pupils respect each other and themselves, to value the individual by building tolerance and understanding of others. These are seen as good values for community living as well as building on pupils self-esteem and emotional resilience.

The schools anti bullying work is excellent. Termly surveys are carried out with pupils and staff to gather their views on bullying within the school. This is then evaluated and information gained is used to further improve the schools approach in this area. Pupils said that bullying can happen but staff are very quick to address this issue. This can be through restorative meetings which are facilitated by suitably trained staff.

Restraints at the school have decreased. Staff receive regular training in the school chosen method of restraint. Restraint is used only when pupils behaviour becomes unsafe for either themselves or others. Restraint records up until recently did not evaluate the effectiveness of the restraint used. A new recording format has been developed to address this issue. Some of the language used in describing the events or behaviours which led to the restraint is vague. By using terms such as 'aggressive' or 'violent' it does not provide those monitoring these records with enough detail so as they can robustly assess if the actions taken were appropriate or to manage behaviour effectively in the future. The school restraint trainers regularly monitor the records and where required actions are taken such as staff receiving further training.

Pupils feel that sanctions at the school are fair however records of sanctions imposed are not consistent. Some of the record of the upper school did not contain robust information on the event or behaviour which led to the sanction, an evaluation of the effectiveness of the sanction or the pupil's comments. Records of sanction in the lower school are appropriate.

Clear policies and procedures are in place to support staff to manage any incidents when pupils may go missing from the school. There have only been two occasions where pupils have gone missing, in the last year. These two events are supported by appropriate records thus evidencing the policy and procedure is adhered too in practice.

Pupils safety is promoted by robust health and safety policies and procedures which are adhered too in practice. This is supported by a clear risk assessment procedure and comprehensive fire safety checks and procedures. These systems ensure pupils live in a safe environment.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Adequate

Leadership and management of the residential provision is adequate.

The school Statement of Purpose reflects its current practice. This document contains all the required information and provides parents and placing authorities with good information on what the school can provide for its pupils. There is also a pupil guide which is in an appropriate format for the pupils.

At the last inspection two recommendations were made only one of these has been met. The one referring to reporting events to the LADO has not been met. There were also three areas for improvement all of these have been met.

Pupils benefit from a stable, well trained staff team who have an in depth knowledge of the pupils they care for. Staff are aware of the key principles, philosophy and ethos of the school. The training schedule ensures that staff receive all the required mandatory training and refresher courses. Senior management confirmed there is additional training from the Child Mental Health Services which reflects some of the more complex needs of the pupils now being referred to the school.

Staff receive regular supervisions and appraisals from senior staff. These sessions cover the work they undertake and their development as workers. This is a two way process. The team feel very well supported amongst themselves and feel they get good support from the team leaders. However the majority do not feel valued or supported by senior management.

Pupils benefit from well run residential units which has had a positive effect on their behaviours and development. Each unit has sufficient staffing levels to meet the pupils needs. The staff team cover all sickness within the team as they feel the use of agency staff is not good for the pupils as they do not have the required knowledge of the pupils needs. Also they are aware of how unsettled and anxious some pupils get with new adults.

Complaints at the school are appropriately dealt with and records demonstrate that the schools policy and procedure in this area is adhered too. Pupils said they knew how to make a complaint and felt confident that staff would address any issues they raised.

There is evidence of the records at the school being monitored but the shortfalls identified in this report had not been identified. In addition to senior management monitoring records there are monitoring visits carried out by a member of the governing body of the school. The reports of these visits contain limited information and do not provide evidence of robust monitoring systems or sufficiently challenged the quality of service provided and identified any areas for improvement.

Most of the school policies and procedure have been reviewed in this last year and are appropriate. The two exceptions to this are the child protection policy which showed no evidence of review since November 2011 and the whistleblowing policy which was last reviewed October 2009.

Pupils files are well organised, appropriately stored and contain all the required information. These ensure that a comprehensive record is maintained of the pupils time at the school including their history and progress.

What inspection judgements mean

| Grade | Judgement | Description |
|---------|-------------|--|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements. |
| Grade 3 | Adequate | A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses. |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 109394 |
| Social care unique reference number | SC039112 |
| DfE registration number | 801/7015 |

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.

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| Type of school | |
| Number of boarders on roll | |
| Gender of boarders | |
| Age range of boarders | |
| Headteacher | Mr Bobby Evans |
| Date of previous boarding inspection | 13/10/2011 |
| Telephone number | 01249 730407 |
| Email address | admin_notton_housesp@bristol-city.gov.uk |

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