

Potterspury Lodge School

Potterspury Lodge, Towcester, NN12 7LL

Inspection dates

30 April 2013

Context of the inspection

The school was last inspected by Ofsted in June 2012 when a number of regulations and national minimal standards were unmet. The school drew up two action plans for improvement in response to the report. The second action plan was evaluated in December 2012 and was deemed to be satisfactory, subject to satisfactory implementation.

This is the first report of a progress monitoring visit undertaken by an education inspector and a social care inspector in order to evaluate the progress made by the school in implementing its action plan to meet the regulations and the national minimum standards.

After the last inspection, concerns were raised with the Department for Education about problems to do with child protection in school, pupils' safety and the information made available to parents, carers and others. Accordingly, this inspection also set out to establish whether the school's child protection policy and procedures are robust enough to safeguard children at the school. In addition, the inspection checked whether the school's complaints policy and procedures were effectively implemented.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

Good progress

The inspection of June 2012 found that child protection arrangements did not follow national and local safeguarding guidance. The child protection policy was not comprehensive enough. The designated person was not liaising effectively with the local safeguarding board, within reasonable timescales, to determine what action to take and who was to undertake investigations, when child protection or behaviour management concerns arose. This was despite all staff, including designated persons, being trained at the appropriate child protection level so that they knew what expectations were.

In response, the school planned to update its child protection policy and procedures to meet requirements. This has been done and the policy now sets out clear aims, roles and responsibilities and procedures for dealing with any allegations against staff, including the designated persons, in both the education and residential provision. The school has now developed close links with the local safeguarding board, ensuring that the appropriate support and guidance are received when concerns related to child protection and behaviour management arise. All members of staff in education and residential provision, including the designated persons, have received the relevant child protection training and are clear about their roles and responsibilities to safeguard children at the school. A recent child protection incident has been dealt with appropriately. The school's child protection policy and procedures are sufficiently robust.

In the education provision, records of sanctions imposed upon pupils were suitably kept, but records of physical restraint were inconsistent and were often incomplete. Physical restraints were not properly recorded, monitored or audited. Senior leaders had signed off physical restraint reports that were not always dated and did not always contain a full description of events and/or outcomes. Pupils' views were insufficiently recorded.

The school planned to review its health and safety policy and procedures to ensure pupils' health and safety. As a result, a standardised form has been produced to ensure consistency of reporting of any behavioural incidents in school. Records of physical restraints now include detailed descriptions of incidents, actions taken and outcomes. Pupils' comments are recorded and acted upon to improve practice. Senior leaders check and audit records of incidents regularly so that their frequency and type can be monitored and trends explored. The records are now dated and signed off by the management of the school.

The last inspection noted that attendance registers were maintained well but the admission register did not contain all of the required information. This has been remedied. The admission register is now maintained in the required manner.

This inspection has found that pupils feel safe and secure in school. They are confident to ask for support whenever required. The school's written complaints policy and procedures and provision of information for parents, carers and others meet requirements. The school's complaints policy and procedures are effectively implemented.

The inspection of June 2012 reported that in the residential provision, leadership and management were inadequate. This was because the school failed to comply with all the safeguarding national minimum standards so that residential pupils' welfare was at risk. The school had not made sufficient improvement on the significant safeguarding weaknesses identified in January 2012. There were important weaknesses in the way senior leaders reviewed records and took action to improve child protection and restraint practices. Leaders did not effectively evaluate the quality of residential provision and an annual written report reviewing the operation and resourcing of the residential provision had not been produced, as required. Monitoring by the Principal, head of care and independent visitors were not coordinated effectively and had not led to sustained improvement in safeguarding practices to ensure that national guidance was properly implemented. Appropriate records were not kept of physical intervention or child protection concerns.

The school has taken appropriate action to rectify the weaknesses identified in the inspection report. The leaders of the school have improved its systems for monitoring all aspects of the residential provision. Records of physical restraints or child protection are now recorded appropriately. These are legible and well kept. Trustees regularly review all incidents related to physical interventions to examine trends or concerns and to bring about improvement in the school's safeguarding practices. The school has now established a clear system for annual checks on the school's operation and resourcing. This system, completed in February 2013, is fully appropriate.

Compliance with regulatory requirements and national minimum standards for residential special schools.

The school has made good progress and now meets all regulatory requirements.

Inspection team

Fatiha Maitland, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter Hylton

Social Care Inspector

Information about this school

- Potterspury Lodge is an independent residential special school near Towcester, Northamptonshire. It opened in 1956 as a Rudolph Steiner school; however, the school no longer follows a Steiner curriculum, although a holistic curriculum is an important part of the school's ethos.
- Its mission is to provide pupils with special educational needs with a wide range of opportunities to experience success. Provision is designed to help them achieve their full potential and meet the demands of life as an independent adult.
- The school is registered to admit 64 boys and girls aged eight to 18 years. However, the school has not admitted girls since July 1988. There are currently 45 boys on roll aged 10 to 18 years. The school offers weekly and termly residential provision plus day provision. Three pupils are termly boarders and seven reside weekly. The rest are day pupils. Post-16 pupils attend college four days a week.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs, primarily for emotional, behavioural, and social difficulties. A significant number are diagnosed with various degrees of autism. All are funded by various local authorities in England. The vast majority of pupils are White British. Three pupils are looked after by local authorities.

School details

Unique reference number	122136
Social care unique reference number	SC012962
Inspection number	421607
DfE registration number	928/6039
<p>This inspection was conducted at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. It was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005.</p> <p>The inspection of residential provision 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.</p>	
Type of school	Residential special school
School status	Independent
Age range of pupils	8-18 years
Gender of pupils	Boys (Registered for boys and girls)
Number of pupils on the school roll	45
Number of part time pupils	0
Number of boarders on roll	10
Proprietor	Trustees of Potterspurty Lodge School
Chair	Nick Avis
Headteacher	John Brown
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2012
Annual fees (day pupils)	£50,322
Annual fees (boarders)	£75,480 (weekly), £80,514 (termly)
Telephone number	01908 542912
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Email address	John.brown@potterspurtylodge.co.uk

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