

# Notton House School

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

<b>Inspection dates</b>	25/11/2013 to 27/11/2013	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	<b>3</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	Adequate	3
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

- The good quality of individualised care that residential pupils receive supports them in their personal, social and educational development. Generally, pupils are making progress. Communication with parents, carers and social workers is good and they are mostly satisfied with the standard of care provided to their children. However, the quality of placement and care plans is inadequate.
- The structured residential environment provides pupils with clear boundaries and known expectations of behaviour. Relationships between the highly committed staff team and pupils are generally positive. Pupils particularly enjoy the range of activities made available to them. These factors help pupils to feel secure.
- The school meets its duty to safeguard pupils. However, referral processes to safeguarding agencies are confused and inconsistent in process and has not been questioned by the Governing Body.
- High levels of staff absences and the admission of pupils with increasingly complex needs have contributed to instability within the residential provision. Staff supervision and appraisal processes are irregular. Pupils' behaviour, particularly within the Lower School, is frequently poor.
- The recently formed leadership team demonstrates a strong focus on improvement. However, some records and policies require review and amendment to ensure that they are fit for purpose. Two national minimum standards are not met.

### 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 two and half hours' notice of the inspection by the lead inspector. All residential facilities were visited. Meetings took place with the: residential pupils; headteacher; head of residential care; deputy headteacher; Chair of Governors; specialist lead staff; and residential and ancillary staff. Other inspection activities included: breakfast, lunch and dinner taken with residential pupils; observation of activities; observation of pupils time spent in their residential accommodation and interactions between staff and pupils; examination of key records, documents and policies; review of completed school surveys and collected data; and telephone discussions with the Local Authority Designated Officer.

## Inspection team

Jennifer Reed	Lead social care inspector
Thomas Webber	Social care inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

Notton House School is a maintained, residential special school operated by Bristol City Council. It is located in a rural area of Wiltshire. The school provides a 38 week per year educational provision for boys aged 9 - 16 years, who have behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. An increasing number of pupils have additional complex needs. All young people referred to the school have a statement of special educational needs. At the time of the inspection, 31 pupils were on the school's register.

The residential accommodation is provided for Upper School pupils in seven distinct areas located in the main school building on the first and second floors. The Lower School pupils reside in an adjacent building. The residential provision was last inspected in March 2013.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Amend the school's safeguarding policies to provide guidance that reflects current good practice guidance and Local Safeguarding Children Board protocols and procedures.
- Strengthen the Governing Body and leadership monitoring of safeguarding within the school to ensure that Local Safeguarding Children's Board procedures are adhered to and effectively implemented.
- Improve the system in place for recording disciplinary measures to facilitate the provision of robust, detailed recording that will enable effective monitoring processes and eliminate the breaching of pupils' confidentiality.
- Evaluate the adequacy of staffing levels within both the Upper and Lower School residential provision to ensure that the diverse and complex needs of each pupil can be satisfactorily and safely met.
- Review all school policies and procedures in a timely manner to determine that these documents provide staff with up to date and relevant guidance to effectively safeguard and promote the welfare of residential pupils.
- **The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.**
  - All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance. (NMS 19.6)
  - 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)

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

#### Adequate

Outcomes for residential pupils are adequate. Generally, pupils' experience of living in the residential provision helps them to develop their social, emotional and educational skills. Pupils' self-esteem and confidence builds from their achievements and the opportunities they have to participate in new activities. Many pupils are learning to become more self-aware and to take some responsibility for their own behaviour, decisions and actions. For example, pupils' involvement in key work sessions, consultation processes, the School Council and participation in team sports.

Some parents report that their children are achieving, their behaviour is improving and they enjoy taking part in activities. Residential pupils identify that their school and boarding experience is helping them to think things through and they are not getting into so much trouble anymore. Individual pupils report that their relationships with their families are improving, they feel calmer, they get on better with others and they are involved in fewer fights. Older pupils receive good support to increase their independent living skills and they are finding out about the world of employment from their work experience opportunities. These opportunities increase pupils' positive self-image of themselves and helps to prepare them to move successfully into adulthood and independence.

Residential pupils generally enjoy positive and constructive relationships with staff. Many pupils are learning to trust adults and talk to staff about their worries and personal issues. Throughout their boarding experience, pupils receive good support to help them increase their tolerance of each other, and to live harmoniously together with pupils from different races, religion and sexuality. However, not all pupils are making significant progress in this area of their lives. This is particularly noticeable within the Lower School residential provision which at the time of the inspection was a very unsettled boarding community. Some young peoples' behaviour is very challenging and shows little respect of the rights of others. This adversely impacts on some pupils' enjoyment of boarding and their rate of developmental progress.

### Quality of residential provision and care

#### Adequate

The quality of care provided by the school is adequate. Parents are positive about the standard of care their children receive and they say that communication between the school and themselves is good. Staff work closely with families to keep them informed of significant events that arise in residential time and keep them updated on the progress their children are making. The school organises and provides transport arrangements to enable parents to attend school parent evenings. This collaboration contributes to improving partnership working arrangements with parents which benefits residential pupils.

Pupils receive sound pastoral support from the school's academic and care staff. Its delivery is underpinned by the school's holistic approach to care and the staffs' good understanding of pupils' individual needs. The school's nurturing approach to promoting pupils' welfare takes into account their diverse needs and backgrounds. This support helps pupils to develop their emotional resilience and to become more self-aware. Although pupils' placement plans and care plans clearly identify pupils' needs, these plans have not been agreed by parents, pupils and placing authorities. Moreover, the school's plans do not show how the school will provide care to individual pupils on a daily basis. Consequently, staff do not have clear written guidance on how to implement plans to meet pupils' diverse needs. The effective evaluation and measurement of pupil's developmental progress is also minimised by the lack of clear objectives and timescales within these plans.

The residential provision is well organised and maintained, providing a comfortable, clean and homely environment for pupils to reside in. The different areas of the accommodation mean that pupils live in small groups together and this helps them to establish and maintain relationships with their peers and staff. Most pupils have single bedrooms which they are able to personalise.

Taking part in regular sporting activities and eating a healthy and balanced diet promotes pupils' good health. Health care needs are well met and catering arrangements are good.

The structured operation of the residential accommodation provide pupils with clear boundaries and known expectations of behaviour. Residential time provides pupils with some free time, opportunities to take part in a wide range of leisure activities, and time to do their homework. Most pupils respond well to the daily routines and the security this gives to their time spent in boarding at the school. However, meeting the high level needs of some pupils means that a disproportionate amount of staff time is given to these pupils to ensure they and others are kept safe. This can mean that other pupils' access to individual support from staff is reduced.

The school operates a School Council which provides pupils with leadership opportunities and enables effective consultation processes to take place between pupils and staff. The school takes pupils' views seriously and this has resulted in some improvements in care practices. Pupils and parents views are surveyed by the school to inform the development of the residential provision and raise care standards.

### **Residential pupils' safety**

### **Adequate**

Safety within the school is adequate. The school fulfils its duty to safeguard pupils. The school's designated child protection coordinator has completed the requisite training and safeguarding concerns are appropriately identified and referred. However, the school's referral processes are confused and inconsistent. Some allegations made against staff have been referred inappropriately to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in Bristol. Other allegations have been referred appropriately to the LADO in Wiltshire, where the school is located. These inconsistencies have not been challenged by the school's Governing Body. To date, there is no evidence found that this confusion has detrimentally impacted on pupils' welfare and protection. The headteacher assures Ofsted that all relevant referrals will now be made to Wiltshire, rather than to Bristol, the local authority operating this school. Not all of the school's safeguarding policies and practice guidance have been updated to reflect Working Together guidance and Local Safeguarding Children's Board protocols and procedures.

Missing episodes from the school are rare. The school demonstrates a robust approach to dealing with any missing episode, by implementing Bristol City Council guidance. The school accessed a copy of Wiltshire's Runaways and Missing from Home and Care protocol during the inspection and senior managers have assured Ofsted that they will review and amend their current school missing person policies to ensure they encompass local protocols.

The school demonstrates a strong focus on addressing bullying issues and pupils report that bullying is effectively managed by staff. Senior managers show diligence in their monitoring of racist and homophobic incidents and take well-considered action to deal with such issues. Staff take account of pupils' cultural differences, perspectives and individual capacity to help them make sense of pupil's behaviours and actions in effort to find effective solutions.

There are clear policies in place for promoting good behaviour and the school's points and reward system encourages many pupils to make positive changes in their behaviour. However, some pupils' behaviour is poor; particularly in the Lower School. The school's list of permissible sanctions are adhered to and implemented by staff. Time for reflection is frequently used as a sanction; however, there is no evaluation of the effectiveness of continually giving this sanction

when it is often repeated for the same pupil and same misdemeanour. Senior managers acknowledge the high number of physical interventions that take place during both care and teaching time. The leadership team are rigorously monitoring and evaluating each restraint undertaken and taking proactive measures to reduce the number of physical interventions.

All disciplinary measures are recorded. However, not all recording is sufficiently detailed and the impact of each intervention to help pupils make positive changes is not evaluated. This hampers effective monitoring to improve outcomes for pupils. The recording system in place requires pupils to sign school record books and make their comments therein. This means that pupils may have sight of what has been written about other pupils and this breaches confidentiality.

Recruitment and selection processes are robust. All necessary vetting checks are carried out for new residential staff to protect pupils from harm. Fire safety, health and safety and utilities checks are regularly undertaken to check that the school provides a safe and well maintained environment for pupils and staff.

### **Leadership and management of the residential provision Adequate**

Leadership and management is adequate. Recent changes in senior leadership within the school and a high level of staff absence are both impacting on the operation of the school. The newly formed senior management team demonstrate a robust approach to improvement and leaders are taking positive steps to raise standards of care to improve outcomes for pupils. Conversely, staff absences adversely impact on the quality of care delivered to pupils, in terms of the consistency of staffing arrangements, the distribution of key tasks and the provision of regular supervision and appraisal processes. Furthermore, there have been recent resignations within the school's Governing Body and low attendance at recent governor's meetings. The Chair of Governors ensures that the required half-termly visit is always made to the residential provision. Their brief report makes relevant recommendations for improvement.

Senior managers are taking steps to reduce the level of staff sickness. Their aim is to provide a robust and effective staffing establishment that has the capacity to sustain and deliver high standards of care and support to pupils. The rigorous monitoring of care processes are developing to inform future planning and to identify effective strategies that are likely to lead to improvement in outcomes for pupils. Senior managers understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school and a detailed improvement plan is in place. The school has satisfactorily met the three national minimum standards that were not met at the previous inspection.

The school has updated some policies and procedures; however, a number of policies have not been regularly reviewed, updated and ratified by the Governing Body. Complaints are well dealt with, although two complaints made against members of staff had not also been entered in safeguarding records. This could potentially have led to the ineffective safeguarding of pupils; however, this did not occur. Senior managers agreed during the inspection to rectify this shortfall retrospectively.

The staff team are well qualified and demonstrate variable levels of competency. Staff members are extremely committed to supporting and looking after pupils well. However, staff are frequently working at full capacity within the residential provision in their attempt to meet the high level needs of some pupils, and to ensure everyone is kept safe. Staff are often required to work in a reactive manner, in response to arising demands, rather than being able to work proactively with individual pupils in a planned way to meet their needs. This is likely to impact on the rate of progress and development of some pupils.

Residential pupils report varying levels of enjoyment while residing at the school. Taking part in activities is the most favoured aspect of their residential time. Senior managers give due

consideration in their monitoring of practice to diversity issues and the impact of care practices on significant groups of pupils. When emerging trends or patterns identify distinct groups of residential pupils, managers explore this further to make sure that all pupils are treated fairly and care practices support each individual's unique needs. Staff undertake specialist training to help them understand pupils' backgrounds and cultures. This affords pupils equal opportunity and is likely to reduce the possibility of discrimination through a lack of staff understanding.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	109394
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC039112
<b>DfE registration number</b>	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.

<b>Type of school</b>	
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dr Jonathon Houston
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	21/03/2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01249 730407
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