

# Potterspury Lodge School

Potterspury Lodge School, Potterspury Lodge, TOWCESTER, Northamptonshire, NN12 7LL

<b>Inspection dates</b>	25/02/2014 to 27/02/2014	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	<b>3</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	Good	2
Quality of residential provision and care	Good	2
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 school has made good progress since the last inspection. Action has been taken to improve safeguarding practice, record physical intervention properly and there is now better monitoring and reporting to the Trustees about the school's operation and resourcing. Placing authorities, parents and residential pupils are positive about care and education.
- Residential pupils stay in a safe school. Safeguarding policy, procedure and practice at the school is now clear and there has been closer working with protective agencies. The school has invested in external audits of their safeguarding practice. These arrangements prioritise children's welfare and safety.
- There is excellent coordination of support across residential, education and therapeutic teams at the school. Residential pupils make very good progress because pastoral support is strong. The residential service has continued to develop effective assessment, care planning and review systems which ensure residential pupils experience tailored, individual care that meets their needs.
- The views and experiences of residential pupils are at the heart of all care practice. Residential pupils have an increasing voice in the school and make mature contributions to the delivery of their care and the residential provision.
- There are two national minimal shortfalls in how the school implements key policies. The health and safety policy and the complaints policy are not put into practice at the school. This aspect of school governance is not yet good enough.

### 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

Ofsted carried out this inspection with three hours' notice. Inspection activities included: observation of residential care practice over two evenings in the three residential houses in use; shared meals and informal discussions with children during activities. There were meetings and discussions with a range of residential, teaching and therapeutic staff and scrutiny of a wide range of documentation about residence. There was no Parent View information or responses to Ofsted's online surveys. However, the inspector spoke with many children in residence throughout the inspection and made contact with parents, placing authorities and the statutory safeguarding authority to gather their views.

## Inspection team

Christy Wannop

Lead social care inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

Potterspurty Lodge School is an independent residential special school for 40 boys aged 8-18 years, 9 of whom reside at the school during the week. The school offers termly boarding, weekly boarding and day provision. The residential accommodation is provided in four residential houses and an independence flat on the school site, though only three are fully operational currently. The school is situated on the outskirts of Towcester and caters for young people with autism and emotional, social and behavioural difficulties and associated learning difficulties.

The residential provision was last inspected by both education and social care inspectors at an integrated full inspection in June 2012. An Ofsted education and social care progress monitoring visit took place in April 2013.

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

- Ensure that leaders in the school capitalise on the school's investment in external safeguarding and health and safety audits and use the findings to drive improvement through systematic action planning, reporting and review.
- Expand the annual qualitative review of residence to include analysis of children's complaints and behaviour, grumbles and bullying in residence to reflect their experience there. Provide some analysis that demonstrates outcomes for children.
- **The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.**
  - The school has a written policy on compliance with relevant health and safety laws which is effectively implemented. (NMS 6.1)
  - The school has, and follows, an appropriate policy on responding to complaints that is compliant with the relevant regulatory requirements (as referenced in 'Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards'). (NMS 18)

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

**Good**

Outcomes for residential pupils are good. They make very good progress and benefit from well-organised residential care that prioritises their personal and social development. They say they like staying at the school and they have great opportunities to build friendships. They experience good social lives through active leisure pursuits, going out to clubs in the community and developing their skills at scouts, cadets, through work experience and in charitable fundraising events.

The school values the residential pupils' voice. Their views and feelings are a focus at all house meetings, in new key working sessions, at the school council and their reviews. Residential pupils feel confident raising concerns or issues with staff and always get a response. Relationships with other pupils are generally good and they get support from trusted adults when personalities clash or they are unhappy. Residential pupils learn to appreciate other children's difference and perspective and the impact their own behaviour can have on others. Reciprocal respect and affection are clear in the very positive relationships between residential pupils and staff. One residential pupil described how a consistent, small staff team had meant that he felt trust and got to know 'his' staff really well and vice versa.

Older residential pupils have a greater sense of respect and separateness from the younger pupils within the school. They have a good sense of progression, of growing in maturity and confidence as they move through the residential units for younger pupils to the post-16 provision. The school plans further developments in provision of sixth form education within school. Additionally, all pupils at the school have the opportunity to spend limited time overnight in the 'independence flat.' Here they learn the skills to help them on to the next stage in their lives in a much more independent atmosphere. They go to college with excellent support from staff, learn how to negotiate public transport and build strategies to help them in challenging social situations at college or in work experience.

### Quality of residential provision and care

**Good**

The quality of residential provision and care is good. Welfare and pastoral support are seamless. Therapeutic support, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and counselling are well coordinated and deliver a service that meets emotional, educational and social need. Families are welcome to visit. Most children have mobile phones and there are Skype facilities for face-to-face communication. Parents say that communication is good and staff keep them up to date with any developments. The school has really made a difference in the lives of some children in crisis and has provided them with nurturing, trusted care when this was not available at home. They have provided valuable shelter to children when families struggle to cope.

Excellent care planning systems reflect the creative thinking in caring for boys with autism, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder and associated learning and behavioural difficulties. Plans are firmly rooted in educational objectives, and the work of residential staff supports achievements in school. Residential pupils are active participants in care planning so the plans reflect their individuality and take account of their unique abilities and vulnerabilities as well as cultural, religious or ethnic backgrounds. Information is up to date, written in plain English, regularly reviewed and updated. Cross-discipline meetings review effectiveness and quickly adapt strategies to children's changing need. Residential pupils' progress is charted through creative life books. These are a photographic record of the achievements and friendships at the school and a permanent record for the child and their family. This process involves them in thinking about communication, behaviour, relationships and increasing skills. Importantly, residential pupils say they feel well cared for.

Ofsted judges the quality of education as good. Education and care teams work effectively together across a 24-hour curriculum. One local authority special educational needs coordinator reported positively about this: 'Potterspurty Lodge caters very well for pupils with high levels of anxiety, the support they provide both in the home and at school is excellent, with key workers linking well with both environments. Parents report good levels of communication, so that strategies can be shared.' There are good opportunities for leisure activities on and off site. Residential pupils are active participants in the local community and staff use school transport to go out and about with residential pupils and use local swimming pools, sports and leisure clubs. The school provides a good environment for active outdoor play in the extensive grounds and the sports hall on site. Residential pupils have full use of school facilities in the evening.

Arrangements for health care and medication are safe and well managed. If residential pupils require first aid treatment or support with health, they get this care from properly trained staff. If residential pupils are struggling to stay in school or feel ill, residential staff are now available through the school day to provide any additional support. Residential pupils benefit from this 'time out' and help from consistent adults. One residential pupil described staff as, 'very passionate about helping children'.

The quality and quantity of food are excellent and school values the importance of social mealtimes as a time of learning and to promote well-being. All residential pupils return to their houses for all meals and sometimes day pupils share this calmer mealtime. A team of permanent staff grow all the vegetables used in the school kitchens. A new chef has revitalized healthy eating, quality organic ingredients and taste. Residential pupils like the portion size and enjoy seconds.

Residential pupils stay in homely but well-furnished and equipped accommodation around a central area. There are five separate units, but only two are currently in use. At weekends, when some residential pupils go home, only one house is operational. Bedrooms can sleep two children, but currently all are single occupancy. Lounges and communal areas balance a 'family' atmosphere with notice boards showing information and reminders for residential pupils about anti-bullying, health promotion and other inspirational messages. Walls are also decorated with residential pupils' framed art work. This gives them a sense of belonging in their home at school.

### **Residential pupils' safety**

### **Adequate**

Residential pupils' safety is adequate. However, arrangements for protecting and safeguarding residential pupils are improved and the school has taken advice from external consultants about this aspect of their provision. The school now has correct procedures for child protection, and training for staff has been updated. Designated safeguarding staff have worked well with the local authority designated officer (LADO) for child protection when there have been concerns. The school also works together with parents and respects their input about safety. For example, there was a recent consultation about e-safety and residential pupils' access to social networking sites on mobile phones. Staff are clear about their responsibilities and residential pupils say they feel safe.

While the environment is safe for children, the school has a policy for health and safety that is not effective or put into practice. The policy describes systems for assessing, planning, reporting and reviewing risks and hazards that are not in place. For example, there is no health and safety committee or training for staff. However, routine health and safety checks and fire safety drills ensure that the environment is safe for staff and pupils and everyone knows what to do in an emergency. Residential pupils have a good knowledge of how they should evacuate in case of fire.

Staff recruitment procedures ensure that only the right adults, properly vetted, work with children. High staff levels, close supervision and residential pupils' contentment at the school, mean that they rarely go missing. On rare occasions, when they have run off into the grounds or left the school grounds completely, staff quickly implement robust procedures for missing children, follow them and keep them in eyesight until they can negotiate a return. This prompt action keeps them safe.

Residential and education staff work together to identify bullying behaviour and there is good training for staff from the head of care who leads on this work. Staff challenge homophobic language and verbal bullying and there are effective messages for children that all people deserve respect. Residential pupils acknowledge that bullying does go on but staff sort it out. Residential pupils are very confident in raising these issues themselves through the 'Grumbles and bullying book.' While there are very good records of how these issues have been sorted out, there is no current overview of residential students' complaints and incidents, grumbles and bullying to reflect the residential experience and outcomes there. The head of care and headteacher plan to analyse these matters in future.

Behaviour management is good. Residential pupils generally do not present the challenge in residence that they do in school and physical intervention and sanctions are rare. Behavioural support plans and risk management strategies for individual children are really strong; they are respectful, positive and achievable. Strategies acknowledge the impact that children's autism and sensory needs have on their interactions with others. Residential staff are consistent, and residential pupils respond to their diffusion and calming techniques to take the heat out of angry behaviour. They learn to talk about their behavioural difficulties and reflect on how they are developing. One wrote, 'I'm getting better at this now.'

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

Leadership and management at the school are adequate. Residential provision has a dynamic and effective head of care and an increasingly well-resourced and skilled staff team. She has an active presence in residence and ensures that residential care delivers against children's statements of educational need, but is also a warm, positive experience for boys staying away from home. This is a calm, structured residential community; care is non-institutional but well organised. Fairness, respecting difference and diverse needs are regular points of discussion between staff and residential pupils. A residential pupil said, 'they do go above and beyond. Parents really like it.'

Monitoring of the residential provision is getting stronger, but there are still areas for improvement in whole school governance. An independent visitor reports every half term to the Trustees. The Principal now monitors key records regularly and reports on an annual basis to the Trustee board. This supplements the head of care's detailed evaluation of the residential provision against the national minimum standards.

However, this monitoring has not picked up on shortfalls in implementation of two key policies, for health and safety and for complaints. The school has received two complaints from parents this year, both managed informally. One was resolved to the satisfaction of the parent. The other was not seen as a complaint and was not resolved by the school. Neither was formally recorded as required by the complaints procedure. The school has missed an opportunity to review its practice following serious concerns and learn from these matters through a properly concluded complaints process. The school has invested in two independent safeguarding audits and a review of health and safety practice. However, there is not yet an action plan or embedded reporting and review of action to improve within governance systems. For example, action and forward planning in response to these external audits were not included in the most recent annual report.

Recent changes to the way residential staff are deployed results in more time for them to meet as a group to discuss care practice and reflect on children's progress. They enthuse about their work with children. The head of care takes effective action about poor care practice and uses professional development so the care team is increasingly effective. Residential staff are well supported through professional induction, supervision and continuing professional development and training. A very high proportion of staff have achieved the nationally recognised qualification in working with children and young people. Senior residential staff also hold qualifications in management and leadership. A professional working with the school described residential staff as, 'open to wanting to try new strategies'.

Placing authorities are positive about the care and education. One said, 'The school is supportive and is engaging with us.' Another spoke of the value for their child in the consistent care and how staff are helping the child to build friendships, something he finds difficult. The children's voice is increasingly well captured and is having a positive impact on the school. Consultation in residence, in council and house meetings is seeing real benefits for residential pupils. Working in partnership with parents is also good. The head of care has consulted with them and respects their views when considering changing aspects of residence. One parent said, 'My child has done incredibly well at Potterspury Lodge.'



## 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>	122136
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC012962
<b>DfE registration number</b>	928/6039

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>	Independent residential special school
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr John Brown
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	20/06/2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01908 542912
<b>Email address</b>	mail@potterspurylodge.co.uk

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