

# Coln House

Coln House Special School, Horcott Road, FAIRFORD, Gloucestershire, GL7 4DB

<b>Inspection dates</b>	04/03/2014 to 06/03/2014	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	Good	2
Quality of residential provision and care	Good	2
Residential pupils' safety	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Inadequate	4

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is inadequate because

- While there are many examples of good practice, there are breaches of national minimum standards in relation to safety and also in leadership and management. In particular, the school's behaviour management techniques are not always consistent with current guidance in this area. Furthermore, neither the school's internal monitoring or that of the school governors provides sufficient evaluation or analysis of the school's records or of practice in relation to physical restraint and its application.
- Despite these shortfalls, the leadership and management of the school and of the residential setting has strengths in other areas. A cohesive, collaborative multi-disciplinary approach across the residential and school settings benefits residential students. This is because all staff are totally committed to helping them to progress and achieve. Parents demonstrate extremely high levels of satisfaction and one commented that this is a 'well run school with exceptional staff.' Another commented that 'it is the last hope for education and staff never give up.' Residential pupils make favourable comments about the school although some miss being at home and would prefer not to stay overnight.
- Specialist departments, such as child protection, horticulture, catering and the residential care team set extremely high standards that they adhere to and constantly seek to improve. This is also true of the behaviour management specialist team. However a shortfall has been found in this area of practice which can impact on the welfare of residential pupils.
- Most residential pupils succeed in this setting following failure in other schools. They develop strength of character and an interest in a varied range of activities because of the stimulating recreational opportunities provided. The activities programme equips residential students with life skills that they can utilise in adulthood.
- Consistency and continuity of care is provided by a stable staff team which is well trained in most aspects of their work and who are knowledgeable about their role. They are all

proud to work in the school and they all think the school meets the differing needs of pupils well. Residential students mostly behave well within the residential settings. They know the expectations and mostly adhere to these. Physical restraint is rarely used within the residential setting but is used more often within the school. Bullying is well managed through close supervision and prompt intervention.

#### **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 three hours notice of this inspection. Discussions were sought from students, staff and parents; in addition, the inspector scrutinised policies, records and documentation. All residential accommodation was viewed, meals eaten with students, and activities, relationships and interactions were carefully observed. There were no pre-inspection surveys or parent view responses so the inspector examined the schools own consultation with students, families and others.

## Inspection team

Barbara Davies

Lead social care inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

This residential special school caters for 35 boys and girls aged 9 to 16 years old. The boarding accommodation is divided into five separate house areas providing small group living. A small cottage that was previously available for independence training is now being used to introduce new residents to the school. All pupils have emotional, behavioural, social and associated learning difficulties.

The school is maintained by the local authority and is situated on the edge of Fairford, a market town in Gloucestershire. The residential provision was last inspected in December 2012.

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

- ensure risk assessments include the measures taken to reduce identified and known risks.
- enable residential pupils to become more independent by being able to lock and unlock their own bedroom doors.
- ensure appropriate storage arrangements for controlled medication.
- update the fire risk assessment with particular reference to clarifying which doors require labelling as fire doors.
- ensure consistent practice regarding the recording of staff recruitment checks.
- **The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.**
  - The school has and consistently implements a written policy on managing behaviour, including promoting good behaviour. This policy includes: measures to combat bullying and to promote positive behaviour; school rules; disciplinary sanctions; when restraint is to be used; and arrangements for searching children and their possessions. (NMS 12.1)
  - The policy complies with relevant legislation and guidance and is understood by staff and children (as referenced in 'Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards'). (NMS 12.2)
  - The records specified in Appendix 2 (Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards) are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate. (NMS 13.3)
  - 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)

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

**Good**

Outcomes for residential pupils are good but some aspects of behaviour management, particularly in relation to the use of a small room that is sometimes used for 'time out' and as a place where physical restraint sometimes occurs, does not follow best practice guidelines and potentially restricts the liberty of residential pupils. This impacts on the experiences and outcomes for some young people. It is also not clear in all respects whether the behaviour being displayed by residential pupils warrants the use of physical restraint. This does not promote their safety or welfare.

There are however, many other positive aspects of behaviour management. Residential pupils mostly behave well within the residential setting and physical restraint is seldom used. This is because staff continually restate the expectations of behaviour and are good role models. Behaviour and manners at mealtimes are exemplary and at other times residential pupils comply with the boundaries set. Residential pupils enjoy very positive relationships with residential staff. Through the support, advice and encouragement that residential pupils receive from residential staff, they learn to be more tolerant of their peers and to be more co-operative with each other in the residential setting. Most parents are happy with the social and academic progress that their children make while at the school. Some commented that their child 'has improved outstandingly' and 'the difference is amazing.'

Residential pupils respect their environment and there is little evidence of damage. A parent commented that behaviour has changed 100% for the better and another noted that staff deal with challenging behaviour better than mainstream. Other parents are less certain that behaviour has improved within their own home environment and community when on week-end and holiday leave as a result of their children attending the school.

Although some residential pupils find it difficult to be away from home, they recognise the benefits of being a residential student in terms of the activities and experiences offered. Through participation in these, young people make good progress, develop confidence in their own abilities and acquire self-esteem. Other young people prefer to be away from their home environment and say, 'it gives me a better chance to stay away from my friends and stay out of trouble.' Young people also progress well in their education and most sustain their placements. This represents good progress for most who have failed in other settings.

Residential pupils are well prepared for making the move to further education and good transition planning means that places are secured well in advance. This reduces young people's anxieties and helps them look forward to the future. Their very positive engagement in local community initiatives, such as delivering wood and caring for the flower arrangements in the village, provides residential pupils with a broad range of life skills that will benefit them in adulthood.

### Quality of residential provision and care

**Good**

The quality of care for residential pupils is good. High levels of support are provided to residential pupils across the care and education settings. As a result residential pupils make good academic and personal progress; with many achieving exceptional progress from their starting points. However, the lack of understanding and monitoring with regard to the use of a small padded room for behaviour management impacts on the quality of care that residential pupils receive during the school day.

Residential care staff are very familiar with the needs of residential pupils because of a well co-ordinated and through referral and admission process. Pre-admission visits to families reassures

both parents and residential pupils about their admission and fosters an approach of working in partnership. Most residential pupils visit the school prior to admission and this helps familiarise them with routines and eases the settling in process.

A period of time in the 'nurturing unit' allows residential pupils to experience highly individualised care and undergo a period of assessment before undertaking a careful and phased transition to the main school. This approach has been highly effective in familiarising new residential pupils with routines and expectations and in reducing disruption. Most residential pupils say they like this method of being introduced to the school while a minority say it has not provided sufficient challenge or variety in terms of their educational and social needs. The school has, in these instances responded to the views expressed by young people and accelerated the transition process.

Residential students are highly motivated, challenged and fulfilled due to the extensive and broad range of extra curricular activities provided each evening, such as gardening, woodwork, football and walking. Some young people also join activities within the local community, such as navy cadets and a local youth football club. Without exception, residential pupils say that participating in activities is one of the things that they enjoy most about the school.

Residential students thrive and are responsive to the many and varied new experiences to which they are introduced and through which they gain transferrable life skills. There are many examples of innovative practice. For example, one young person and the deputy head teacher very successfully joined an expedition from another school to climb Mount Everest and reach 'the highest classroom.' Opportunities are being extended to more residential pupils as the school is organising its own expeditions but to destinations that are geographically closer.

Academic and care staff work very closely and support each other in their role. Care staff support young people with their homework and because of this young people have made progress in their academic achievements.

The well-being of residential pupils is at the very fore-front of practice. A strong ethos of caring for the individual is evident at all levels across the disciplines. Residential staff are well aware of individual traits and anxieties and these are catered for very well within the planning of shifts and activities. Staff really want young people to do well and to succeed.

There are many examples of innovative practice which support young people to make progress in every aspect of their lives. The school assembly at the end of the day recognises individual achievements. The reward system, which allows young people to exchange points for products from an on-line store, provides young people with tangible evidence of their progress as well as equipping them with life skills.

Healthcare is given a high priority. The school's arrangements for attending to young people who are ill, have accidents or require medication are very well managed and young people receive the treatment they require. However, the storage arrangements for controlled medication do not fully conform to best practice as the medical cupboard does not have a separate locked compartment for controlled medication.

Staff are well qualified to attend to the needs of young people in a medical emergency as the majority are first aid trained. There is excellent oversight of the medical needs of young people by the school's own nurse. Regular liaison with the school doctor means that healthcare concerns are promptly discussed and referred. The school has its own team of therapists and young people benefit psychologically from being able to receive individual sessions and the staff team receive advice, guidance and support, from an appropriately qualified practitioner, about how to manage the complex issues that residential pupils present.

The school is a traditional building and provides some challenges in respect of maintenance. However, these are well managed through a continual programme of refurbishment. Communal areas and individual bedrooms are nicely decorated and furnished. They provide accommodation which is comfortable and in which they can relax.

The catering provision is, within its own right, an area of excellence in the school. Careful attention is paid to the dietary needs of individuals and healthy and nutritious meals are served to all. Young people enjoy the food and menus are adapted in response to the informal comments they make following their meals. Other opportunities for boarders to influence the menu are provided through the school council. High levels of satisfaction are expressed about the meals. Products grown by residential in the school's grounds are often used within the meals served. This gives residential pupils satisfaction and is a further example of the life skills they acquire that can be used in their adult life.

Laundry provision is made where necessary and residential pupils have provision made for toiletry and stationary items. Residential pupils say their personal possessions are safe. Some have lockers and others store items in their bedrooms. Bedrooms are routinely open during times when young people are present so access to their items is not an issue. However, the arrangements for locking and unlocking of bedroom doors does not promote their independence.

### **Residential pupils' safety**

### **Inadequate**

Residential staff consistently implement the school's behaviour management policy to positive effect. Within the residential setting, a positive approach is taken and staff foster positive, encouraging and meaningful relationships with residential pupils. Residential pupils mostly respond well to requests from staff and their behaviour is mostly good in the residential setting where physical restraint is rarely used.

The school has a permanent behaviour management specialist team whose role it is to oversee and respond to incidents during the school day. The team knows their students well and this has helped reduce incidents over time. The ability of residential pupils to request time out of lessons to go to 'the hub' to receive the support of the specialist team, has been an effective way of helping pupils take responsibility for their own behaviour.

The use of a small padded room, known as 'blue room', provides an additional resource which some young people report that they go to independently because they 'like to thump and kick the walls.' However, residential pupils are, at times, taken there by staff when they are removed from lessons. The use of such a confined space to manage behaviour can potentially escalate a situation, exert unnecessary levels of control over children and restrict their liberty. The room has been without a handle on the inside but was replaced during the inspection. This means there has been the potential for residential pupils to either be accidentally or purposefully locked in the room with no means of independently getting out. The school's behaviour management policy does not include guidance on the use of the 'blue room' which means there is the potential for it to be misused to restrict the liberty of residential pupils. The school has said it will conduct an immediate review of the use of this room.

Detailed incident reports are completed of each incident of physical restraint. However, in some instances, the electronic formatting of the record makes the duration of the restraint unclear. In instance of physical restraint in the residential unit, it was unclear whether the threshold for physical restraint taking place had been reached. This is because the young person is described as having been held because they left the unit; which in itself is insufficient grounds for physical restraint. These issues have not been identified within the monitoring that takes place by either the governors or by senior staff in the school.

Residential pupils say they feel safe in the school and can identify people they would talk to if concerned or unhappy. Child protection arrangements are a particularly strong feature of the school's practice with a clear emphasis being placed on the training of all staff. Staff are well acquainted with the school's child protection procedure. Child protection is given the highest priority. The school refers concerns to the local social services and works hard to secure services for residential pupils and their families, where necessary. A parent commented that their 'child feels safe and knows the staff are protecting her.'

Individual risk assessments are in place for residential pupils who present challenging or risky behaviour. These identify the risks well and include a positive behaviour management plan which advises staff on the best strategies to use with individuals. However, risk assessments are not specific about how the actual risk element is to be reduced, for instance a risk of self-harm presented to a residential student by the cord of a hairdryer does not outline any precautionary action taken in respect of access to the hairdryer. The safety of the young person is not compromised as precautions had been taken in practice but not recorded.

A safe environment is maintained with routine and annual testing of all gas, electrical and mechanical appliances. Internal fire safety checks are completed at the frequency recommended by the local fire officer; which ensures residential pupils are protected in the event of a fire. However, some doors with fire labels were noted to be locked. Advice sought by the headteacher during the inspection indicated that due to the nature of the rooms, the doors were not required to have the fire safety signs. The risk assessment had not been updated in respect of changes to the usage of rooms and the head teacher made a commitment to request an immediate update of the fire risk assessment to include a review of all doors to clarify their status.

Recruitment procedures for permanent residential and teaching staff are thorough and safeguard residential pupils against the likelihood of coming into contact with unsuitable adults. Some minor shortfalls were found in relation to the records held on ancillary staff. For example, a record of interview had not been made despite one having taken place.

There is a clear policy for countering bullying which applied in practice. Staff are aware of the potential for bullying and because of this are vigilant in their approach. Young people say bullying does sometimes occur but because staff are always around 'they are there as quick as a flash.'

There have been no incidents of residential pupils going missing. Residential pupils are aware of safe areas within the school grounds where they can go to 'get space' and generally do not abuse the trust placed in them. Most incidents occur during school time and the intensive support that young people receive during these helps obtain an amicable resolution. This reduces the potential for them to go missing.

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

Leadership and management of the residential provision is inadequate because monitoring of the school's practice and has failed to identify and comment on the shortfalls found during this inspection. In particular, the shortfalls in relation to the use of a particular behaviour management technique and the lack of clarity in the restraints record about the duration of and reason for some restraints.

The head of care and senior managers are passionate about their role and demonstrate a commitment to the continual development and improvement of boarding which is seen as playing an integral and critical role in the school. Their enthusiasm, positivity and drive generates itself to the rest of the staff team and to residential pupils. Parents, almost with exception, comment that the school is very well managed and that the staff team work together well and follow through on



consequences.

Since the last inspection advisory recommendations have been addressed and there have been improvements to practice including the introduction of a new points system, refurbishment of some of the residential areas, obtaining an apple juicing licence, completion of outdoor challenges by residential students with more planned, the introduction of a school magazine, collections and developments of peasants and wild birds in the garden and governors visiting regularly for mealtimes

Good account is taken of the views of parents, young people and social workers which are sought through home visits and questionnaires. Based on their feedback, practice issues are addressed and improvements made, such as introducing a house blog on the school's website.

Strong commitment and interest are displayed by the governors, with visits far exceeding the frequency specified in standards. Reports of visits completed by the governors comment on matters noted and sometimes suggest ways in which practice can be improved. However, while there is evidence that the records of sanctions and restraint have been reviewed by governors, neither the reports of their visits or the records themselves make any reference to any matters noted or requiring attention. There is therefore a lost opportunity to comment on the appropriateness of the measures being used, such as the use of the 'blue room', and to drive improvement.

Internal monitoring of these issues, by a senior member of staff, are thorough in respect of measuring the progress or lack of progress that individuals make. However, patterns and trends, although recognised and responded to in practice, are not recorded. The current recording system does not make it easy to identify particular issues, such as whether a restraint has occurred during education or residential time or if the 'blue room' has been used. The school has recognised this shortfall and is imminently due to revert to its former electronic system which, it says, more easily allows for patterns and trends to be identified.

The school's website and written information provides residential pupils, parents and other stakeholders with a clear understanding of the aims, objectives and ethos of the school alongside keeping interested parties up to date with account of the activities and events in which young people participate. Parents comment that they find the website 'excellent'; 'love the updates' and 'love seeing what he has been doing in the week.'

Residential students fully understand the routines and rewards system because of the comprehensive induction they receive before starting the school. They particularly like the 'connect' points system and being able to access information on-line which keeps them informed of their achievements.

The school's policies and procedures support staff in their role with the exception of providing guidance on the use of the 'blue room' and 'time-out' and the potential for these, if misused, to restrict the liberty of residential pupils; which would be illegal. The availability of the school's policies and procedures on the school's web-site makes most of the school's practices available and transparent to others.

One of the school's governors plays an active role in reviewing the policies and procedures which guide staff well in their role. The safeguarding policy has recently been reviewed and updated and now includes information about child sexual exploitation.

Residential staff present as consistent, competent and confident in their role. They are well equipped to perform most aspects of their role because the school's written guidance and training programme familiarises them with their roles and responsibilities. However, a lack of guidance,

across the disciplines, about the use of the 'blue room' and the restriction of liberty leaves residential pupils and staff vulnerable Residential staff are well supported in their role through termly supervision and because they are aware that 'the doors of the head teacher and head of care are always open'.

Staffing levels are high and the needs of young people are mostly well met. Staff retention is good, with just one member of staff having left since the previous inspection; which is indicative of how much staff enjoy their role and are committed to the school.

## 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>	115812
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC040533
<b>DfE registration number</b>	916/7005

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>	Maintained
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	35
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	9 to 16
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr C Clarke
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	13/11/2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01285 712308

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