

Loxley Hall

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Jackie Callaghan
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Nominated person	Peter Hogg
Date of last inspection	09/06/2009

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good: this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Loxley Hall School is a residential/day special school providing education for students with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. The school is situated in a rural setting a few miles outside the town of Uttoxeter. The main building is a large, two storey country house. Rooms on the ground floor consist of offices, a main kitchen, a dining hall and communal rooms for all students. The residential provision is located on the second floor and consists of two mini-kitchens, dining areas and a sitting room. There is also a private meeting room, bedrooms, shower and bathing facilities. Students have access to the unit's kitchens and the domestic style laundry as part of their life skills training.

The school caters for boys only between the ages of 11 to 16 years. The residential provision operates Monday to Friday each week during term time. There is a flexible boarding arrangement with students being able to stay a maximum of two nights a week. The school also offers an extended day where students stay in school until approximately 8pm. They have their evening meal and take part in activities. There are 20 students who currently access the residential provision.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

This was an announced inspection and it covered all the key national minimum standards in the Every Child Matters outcome groups plus organisation.

This is a school with exceptional strengths that meets all and exceeds the vast majority of the national minimum standards. The overall judgement on the quality of this provision is outstanding. The quality of communication between residential staff and educational staff is excellent and staff make strong links over matters such as child protection, health, home and education.

One recommendation to help improve the already outstanding practice has been raised as a result of this visit. This is to provide opportunities for students to directly contribute to their placement plans. This will further enhance the quality of students' plans which are already written to an exceptionally high standard.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the school was asked to develop more opportunities that exposed students to different cultural foods. They were also asked to consider changing the physical residential environment in order to provide greater opportunities for students to prepare their own meals.

Students now regularly experience different cultural foods throughout the whole school day. In addition to this, residential students celebrate different cultures by holding themed cultural nights. Students shop and help to prepare the meals they eat. This further helps to deepen their understanding. Students now have greater access to a new home economics room where they cook different foods in order to help broaden their independence levels. This, coupled with cooking basic foods in the unit's kitchen, gives students greater opportunities to develop self-help skills.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Students are receiving excellent support from staff with regard to their health and emotional well-being. This successfully ensures that all aspects of their individual health needs are met. Medicines are safely managed and staff are fully trained in the administration of medication. Excellent partnership working with other health professionals, for example, the children and adolescence mental health service is ensuring maximum benefits for all students. A parent confirmed this view by saying 'welfare and health issues are dealt with really well'.

Students thoroughly enjoy the food during their stay. One student commented that 'the food is really nice and I can choose what I want to eat'. They are encouraged to be healthy in their choices and individual needs and preferences are completely provided for. All food is freshly cooked on the premises by staff that understand nutritional issues and how these can impact on individuals. All meals are cooked from scratch with fresh ingredients which ensures that optimum nutrition is established and maintained. As a result, mealtimes are enjoyable social occasions.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Students enjoy a high level of privacy and confidentiality in all aspects of their daily living; this helps them to feel happy and protected. One student commented that 'I feel safe at school'. The complaints procedure is easily accessible to students and they are confident that any complaint will be taken seriously by staff. There are excellent relationships between the students and residential staff. This together with the open culture successfully encourages students to freely raise any issues they may have.

Staff have a comprehensive understanding and commitment to implementing the school's anti-bullying policy. Students are actively enabled to express any concerns they may have. Students reinforce this view by saying, 'we fill in bullying forms and staff sort it out' and 'I have been bullied by another student but staff were quick to stop it and now we are friends again'. Staff at all levels understand and are clear about what they should do if there is a safeguarding issue. This includes domestic and office staff. They all receive systematic training in safeguarding. As a result, all

staff are very aware of vulnerability issues for students in residential care.

The school has a growing range of behaviour management systems in place including merits. Students are very aware of the rewards they can earn through the school day, and can discuss these. Staff have completed training and are very competent in diffusing situations to try and avoid the use of physical intervention. Physical intervention is a very rare occurrence in the residential unit. There has been a massive reduction in the use of physical interventions during the school day. This profound reduction is mainly due to the introduction of the Emotional Support Unit. Students can self refer in order to access this unit. This has innovatively given students an additional strategy by which to help them manage their own behaviour.

The school takes steps to ensure that students who are absent from the school without consent are protected in line with written policy and guidance. Rigorous systems are in place for health and safety. All fire checks and drills are completed regularly. Consequently, staff and students are very confident about what they should do in the unlikely event of fire. Significant time is taken to ensure that all risk assessments and other similar written documentation purposely provide in practice, excellent outcomes for students.

There is a cohesive recruitment system in the school which maintains excellent levels of safety for the students. This includes Criminal Records Bureau checks at enhanced level, proof of identity and references prior to employment. The overall management of this system also ensures that students are involved in the recruitment of new staff. This can be through taking applicants on a guided tour or being part of the interview panel. A working example of students being involved is the successful recruitment of the new head teacher last year.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The staff are extremely familiar with the unique needs of each student. There is a dynamic system for ensuring that each student receives the relevant personal support. This includes, the very recent introduction of speech and language input in the school. Relationships between the students and staff are exceptional. As a result, staff ensures students feel able to talk to them about their problems.

Effective links between the school and residential provision ensure continuous development of the 'whole' student. There are regular times in residence when the two groups of staff work together to ensure consistency of progress. Residential staff are aware of educational targets and ensure that students are enabled to develop at every opportunity. As a result, residential students really benefit from their stay.

Although the school makes sure that there is an effective 24 hour curriculum, the residential time is more relaxed. This means that students enjoy their activities while being with their friends. Students really enjoy a wide range of activities both in the

school and out in the community. This gives them the opportunity to experience and learn new skills. This is echoed by both students and parents. Comments include, 'I do enjoy sleeping at Loxley and taking part in the activities that are on offer' and 'the school offers a wide range of activities for our young person. He enjoys this very much'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Students are exceptionally well cared for by a small and established residential staff team. Students have an active input into issues that affect them within the school. They say 'I do have a say in what happens upstairs' and 'staff listen to me'. There are many remits where students are encouraged to voice their wants and needs. These include key worker meetings which are well organised and school council meetings.

Students are well supported when they move into residence and say that staff make them feel very welcome and try to settle them in, in a pleasant and supportive way. They receive a welcome pack which sets out the rules, how to complain and what to expect. Students are as equally well supported when they leave the school where they have many opportunities to celebrate their achievements.

Students have proficient plans in place that highlight areas of specific need and how staff are to respond to these within the residential provision. As a result, assessment and care planning systematically informs staff how to meet students' needs on a day-to-day basis. However, the student voice although exceptionally strong in many areas, does not have overt inclusion within care planning. Students writing their own pen-portrait will not only promote stronger inclusion, but it will give staff greater understanding of students' needs.

All students either go home or to carers at the weekends and holidays. Arrangements for contact with parents or carers by the students are within their files. Parents comments confirm that communication is consistent. For example, one parent states that 'I get regular telephone calls from my son, plus the staff phone'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The school provides well-maintained and comfortable areas for the students to use during their stay. Students say they feel comfortable and safe in their environment. There are many areas for the students to relax and enjoy including games rooms, lounges and bedrooms. At the time of the inspection a new residential home is being renovated. This, when complete, means that the residential establishment will move completely into this self-contained house. This will provide a better level of domestic accommodation for students in a more conducive environment and will significantly improve outcomes.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Students are well served by the provision as identified in the Statement of Purpose. The whole management and organisation of the school is exceptionally strong and delivers very positive outcomes for students. The residential management team are very effective; they know the needs of the students well, and how they should be met. They have extensive knowledge of operational issues in the school and manage the staff in a way that fruitfully gets the best out of them. Efficient systems are in place to scrutinise the quality of the care being delivered and the cohesive management team communicates effectively to ensure that the students receive a positive service that promotes their progression.

Staff are clearly motivated by their enjoyment of working with the students and watching them progress. The team works well together and possess the skills that they need to explicitly look after students. There are enough staff on duty at all times to provide safe care and this gives the staff plenty of opportunities to spend quality time with the students.

Training and support to staff is well organised including essential training through a rolling programme which is well monitored. All staff have completed their National Vocational Qualification at level 3 and there are regular annual refresher courses for staff. There is a staff induction process and staff benefit from regular support and supervision.

The promotion of equality and diversity in the school is outstanding and the staff ensures that each student is seen as an individual and is treated as such. Each student, whatever their needs or disability has equal access to the services that the residential establishment successfully provides.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Compliance with national minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- explore ways of enabling students to be more active in contributing their views and assessed needs to their placement plans. (NMS 17.2)