

# North Hill House

North Hill House, Fromefield, FROME, Somerset, BA11 2HB

<b>Inspection dates</b>	24/02/2015 to 26/02/2015	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is good because

- The overall effectiveness of the residential provision at North Hill House is good. Students make excellent progress in an environment that is sensitive to their needs. They are able to develop at their own pace and ability, with encouragement and support from trained and experienced staff.
- The safety of residential students is a priority at this school. Risk management effectively balances safety with opportunity for personal development and independence. Residential students are supported exceptionally well in managing their behaviour with creative tools such as a 'time to think' plan.
- Leaders and managers are aware of the strengths and areas for development within the school. The residential provision is a significant part of the school where care, education and therapy work well together delivering bespoke packages of care to residential students. The senior leadership team are committed to further develop practice to improve outcomes.
- The residential provision is well organised and managed. Parents are complimentary regarding the quality of care provided. Residential students report that they like this school and recognise how it has helped them.
- All national minimum standards are met. To further improve, leaders and managers are asked to consider three points for improvement that relate to the recruitment of staff, their involvement in multi-agency decisions and the replacement of a stair carpet.

### Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

## Information about this inspection

This inspection was announced at 09:00 on 24 February 2015 and commenced four hours later. Inspection activities included discussions with residential students, the principal, the head of care, senior leaders, care staff, the therapeutic team, and a compliance officer. Key documents and policies were reviewed. Meals were sampled with pupils and a tour undertaken of the residential accommodation and school facilities. There were no Ofsted survey responses from residential pupils or staff. Entries on Parent View were less than 10, therefore analysis of responses is not available. Contributions were received from a parent, the local police and the local authority designated officer.

## Inspection team

Clare Davies

Lead social care inspector

# **Full report**

## **Information about this school**

North Hill House is an independent residential special school for boys and girls, aged 6-19 years, 26 of whom reside at the school during the week. The residential accommodation is provided in five areas, four of which are located within the school and the fifth is in the nearby town for pupils in post 16 education. The school is situated on the edge of the market town of Frome and provides for pupils who have Autistic Spectrum Disorders (Asperger syndrome) and associated learning difficulties. The residential provision was last inspected in November 2013.

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

- review school policies and procedures to identify when multi-agency decision making is required.
- ensure that the increase in residential placements is matched with the recruitment of additional staff.
- replace the stair carpet in the post 16 house.

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

### Outstanding

Outcomes for residential students are outstanding. The students enjoy their time at this school and recognise their progress. 'This school has really helped me', a residential student reported. A strength of this school is the careful planning and management of transitions. From the initial entry to the school and subsequent transitions throughout. For example, the plans for a residential student to move bedrooms may take several months at the student's pace. Detailed transition plans support students with managing change as they move through the school to new classrooms, a different residential group, off site education and eventually off site residential provision.

Residential students gain in confidence as they learn new skills and find encouragement to try new things. Students are benefitting from full time education in this residential placement. This has a positive impact on their learning considering many students have not previously been able to access education for lengthy periods of time. All residential students who left the school in July 2014 moved on to further education placements.

Residential students benefit from the fantastic commitment and dedication from all staff. They place the wellbeing of students at the centre of their practice. A parent reports that this school is not only child focused, it is very inclusive of parents as well. They describe this school 'like a family', where communication is 'excellent'. Staff are imaginative in finding ways to support students, ensuring that it is meaningful and with purpose. Collaborative working between care, therapy and education staff contributes to residential students achieving outstanding outcomes in relation to their starting point.

Residential students are able to voice their opinion, share their views, make choices and influence the arrangements of the residential provision. Regular house meetings and a student council provide formal forums for consultation. One residential group requested an upgrade of a television to play their games consoles on. A compromise has been reached where residential students suggested that they complete some extra tasks around the residential areas in order to be rewarded with this new equipment.

Residential students are provided with an excellent range of facilities and resources to experience purposeful and enjoyable activities. Sensory toys, a sensory room and an activity room provide relaxation and stimulation as suggested by the therapists. A secure outdoor area provides a safe space for games and play equipment. Staff at this school challenge the barriers faced by young people with a learning disability and promote inclusion; this involves access to community facilities such as the sports centre, swimming pool cinema and bowling alleys. Good staffing levels enable students to enjoy some individual activities such as horse riding and music lessons. Access to activities in the school and the wider community provide excellent opportunities for personal development and fulfilment.

Residential students are fully involved in identifying behavioural triggers and risks that may lead to their behaviour escalating, requiring staff intervention. The simple traffic light system provides visual prompts from green to amber to red. It enables them to decide what action they need to take to modify their behaviour. Reward charts and a reward system of vouchers encourage residential students in their personal achievements.

Residential learners are supported in developing independence skills and are encouraged as much as possible to undertake day to day living and personal tasks. Independent skills are extended beyond the school site and into the community through shopping, use of public transport, attendance at local college and joining community based groups. Some students make a

contribution to the local community through work experience and volunteering.

### **Quality of residential provision and care**

### **Outstanding**

The quality of the school's provision for residential students is outstanding. Leaders and managers have developed the assessment process to be comprehensive prior to a student starting at this school. Extensive assessment and phased induction allows the school to identify individual needs to form strategies and therapeutic programmes in order to meet them as soon as the placement begins. Parents and students welcome the sensitive handling of the induction into the school supported by helpful documentation.

There is an extensive wealth of knowledge and experience amongst the staff across the school. Such skills are a significant factor in contributing to the excellent progress students make. The in-depth knowledge is reflected in the care planning and review process where targets are clearly identified. During the residential time students are actively encouraged and supported to work towards their targets. Staff are imaginative in finding ways to communicate with students using pictures, symbols and photographs. Incentive and reward charts are effective in supporting students reach their targets. This creative approach engages them in their care planning and personal development.

Medication is administered safely with regular audits of the medication stored. Staff are provided with training to ensure their knowledge and practice of administering medication is safe. The collaboration from the therapy team ensures that students receive bespoke programmes of care throughout the waking day. Students receive consistent responses from the staff as they refer to the strategies devised and agreed upon. This extensive range of therapeutic support promotes the health and well-being of students while addressing their complex behaviours linked to their autism, their mental health and associated disorders.

There are four residential areas within the school and a house in the nearby town for six older students in post 16 education. The onsite accommodation supports students who struggle with transitions, avoiding the need to use transport each day for their education. Each residential area has its own character providing a well-maintained environment. Any damage is promptly repaired or replaced to ensure that students live in a pleasant homely environment. One area has an enhanced appearance following redecoration and new furniture. The school development plan includes the same makeover for the other areas during this year's summer holiday period. Students like their single bedrooms and the fact that they each have their own en-suite bathroom. Meals are taken in the school dining room therefore only snacks and drinks are available on the residential areas. There are limited kitchen facilities in the residential provision however, cooking occurs during school time and as an after school activity to develop these life skills. The house for post 16 students is more domestic in style enabling students to cook their own meals and manage their laundry. The stair carpet in this house is in need of replacement. This work is planned for the forthcoming school holiday.

### **Residential pupils' safety**

### **Good**

There is good provision for ensuring the safety and well-being of residential students. Safety is given high priority, it is embedded in practice throughout the school. The robust procedures for the recruitment of staff ensure that only suitable people are appointed after a series of checks. Contractors and visitors are accompanied around the school to safeguard the welfare of residential students. A leaflet issued to all visitors informs them of the school's safeguarding procedures and the importance of protecting everyone on site.

This school has forged a successful relationship with the local police community support officers

(PCSO). This allows for positive relationships to develop with students and for them to have an understanding of the helpful role of a police officer, not someone who is only present at times of a crisis. In return, the local police have increased their knowledge and understanding of communicating with students with autism and Asperger syndrome through a training package created by the school and the PCSO. When the police have cause to speak with a student the school provide an information sheet with key details on how to communicate and any particular behaviour they need to know about. The PCSO is encouraging other schools and colleges to adopt this excellent practice.

The police officer delivers talks to students on 'choice and consequences'. This effective way of working with the school has led to a reduced number of calls for police attendance. There are plans to work with the senior leadership team in devising a restorative justice system within the school. This school provides students with the skills and knowledge on how to keep themselves safe. Extensive project work devised by a national charity has alerted students to the dangers of the internet and social media, abuse by others and sexual exploitation. Posters and displays of art around the school raise awareness of how to report bullying behaviour and to follow internet safety, 'surf safe'. The strength of relationships between students and staff enables students to report such incidents with confidence, knowing that staff will sort it out.

Students feel safe in this school, they are secure in the knowledge that the staff will protect them and support them with any difficulties. There has been no incidents of students going missing. Staff are highly skilled in their understanding of students with autism and associated complex needs. Residential staff understand behaviour as a means of communication and collaboratively with education staff, and therapists, they help students to find more acceptable ways to express their emotions. Students are empowered to manage their behaviour through creating a 'time to think' plan designed on the traffic light system. With staff support they are able to identify what action they can take when they are feeling angry or upset. These child friendly documents are excellent tools to include students in making choices about their behaviour. Photographs provide visual cues of agreed safe areas to go to and key staff are listed, as selected by the student, identifying adults they can talk to.

Since the last inspection there has been a significant decrease in the amount of physical intervention used. This achievement is as a result of training and emphasis on the de-escalation of behaviour. Records have improved with a recent introduction of an electronic system. This provides automatic notifications to senior managers of any incident report for them to review the safety of students and staff promptly.

Three members of the senior leadership team are trained as designated safeguarding officers. This level of cover ensures someone with this enhanced level of training is always available to staff. The policies and procedures relating to the protection of students are up to date and incorporate the latest guidance from the Department of Education. Records confirm that this school appropriately responds to safeguarding concerns liaising with health and social care professionals. On one occasion the principal did not strictly adhere to safeguarding procedures. The local authority designated officer (LADO) reports that a school decision was made without a multi-agency discussion. It is recognised that this action was taken in the best interest of protecting students.

Residential students live in an environment where health and safety is exceptionally well promoted. There is a sense of community responsibility for safety which results in prompt and effective maintenance. The suitability of the environment is under regular review to provide the safest arrangements. For example, the reception area was considered to be a risk to students when sharing this space with unknown visitors to the school. As a result a new reception area has been created for visitors ensuring the school entrance is for students only. Fire safety is taken seriously with regular evacuations at different times of the day. Support staff for the safety and

protection of the site have experience of being fire fighters. This ensures expert knowledge and skills contribute to fire safety across the school.

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

The leadership and management of this residential school is good. Since the last inspection a new senior leadership team has been appointed to three key posts such as; the principal, the head of care and the head of education. The principal has successfully achieved a smooth transition of these changes. Established staff members report that their initial anxieties of changes within the school have been allayed by the successful cohesion and direction of the new senior leadership team.

As a result of the changes in personnel, there has been a review of policies, procedures and practice. This has led to several changes across the school. The new assessment procedure is reported to be a success, providing comprehensive details on the needs of students to ensure the school can appropriately meet them. The head of care is training to be a trainer specific to autism. To support staff in their direct work with students, materials and literature on autism are available in a resource library. Staff have received training to improve their report writing and develop their skills in communication.

The principal is suitably trained to deliver safeguarding training to all staff. He is committed to ensure that staff are trained to a higher level than the mandatory requirement having achieved this with 60% of the staff team to date. A training module available online has been issued to parents inviting them to raise their awareness of safeguarding matters.

Residential staff report that they enjoy their work and feel trained and supported to deliver high quality care. There are good staffing levels to supervise residential students, often on a ratio of 1:1. This means that the placements of new students require staff recruitment at the same pace. Recruitment has been hampered through lack of local employee availability resulting in some staff working additional hours. Currently the situation is manageable and anticipated to improve as recent recruitment has proved fruitful. The senior leadership team are determined to be successful in their recruitment campaigns without compromising on their requirement to employ a high calibre of staff.

There is a strong commitment to the continuing improvement of the residential provision and the service it provides for students and their parents. Recommendations and points for improvement from previous inspections have been acted upon, having been incorporated into the school development plan. A compliance officer within the wider organisation undertakes regular visits, appropriately seeking the views of students and their parents. This monitoring serves to quality assure and improve the care for residential students.

## 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>	131975
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC033014
<b>DfE registration number</b>	933/6200

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>	26
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	12 to 18
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr S Nowakiewicz
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	28/11/2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01373 466222
<b>Email address</b>	swaveknowakiewicz@priorygroup.com

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2013

