

Coln House

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

Inspection dates

11/01/2016 to 13/01/2016

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Requires improvement 3

The quality of care and support

Requires improvement 3

How well children and young people are protected

Requires improvement 3

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement 3

Summary of key findings

The residential provision requires improvement because

- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection and began her tenure in September 2015. Between the previous inspection and the new headteacher starting, management oversight and recording became less effective.
- The current headteacher has completely overhauled systems in the school; including commissioning independent reviews of the education and care services. These reviews uncovered weaknesses in the qualifications of staff, safeguarding procedures, and the educational outcomes of young people. Some of these weaknesses have been remedied and there is now a clear focus on outcomes for children and young people. A detailed improvement plan is in place to support and strengthen the additional changes that are required.
- Young people are making significant progress in their educational outcomes, due to education becoming a clear priority for the school. However, care plans have no focused targets for children and young people's social, academic and behavioural success. This example is a pattern that can be seen in many systems and procedures that are yet to be embedded into practice.
- The monitoring, scrutiny and governance of the residential provision is not embedded and robust. Young people are not active participants in planning their own care or the future of the school. Staff are not all qualified to the required level, and further improvements are required in the staff team's management of young people's behaviour.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:

NMS	National minimum standard
1	Statement of principles and practice
1.1	A suitable statement of the school's principles and practice to be known as the Statement of Purpose is available to parents and staff, is made known to children through an appropriate method of communication and is seen to work in practice. The statement describes the overall purpose of the school and describes any theoretical or therapeutic model underpinning the practice of the school. It also explains the ethos and philosophy of the school, and provides an outline of provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. (The existing statement does not reflect the practice in the residence or school following a change of leadership)
2	Induction, transition and individual support
2.2	The school identifies at least one person other than a parent, outside the residential and teaching staff, who children may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at the school. The school ensures that children know who this person is, and how to contact them. This person may be known as the 'independent person'. (This is in relation to children and young people having access to an independent person/advocate)
2.5	Arrangements are in place to review how the child is settling following admission to the school. In an emergency admission a review meeting is initiated as soon as possible (and never longer than four school weeks after admission) to consider whether the child should remain at the school, or whether it is in that child's interests to move to a different placement. Such a review meeting may involve (where appropriate) the school, the placing authority, the parents/carers or those with parental responsibility, those with significant involvement with the child (such as social services or health services) and, where possible, the child. (This is in relation to the admission process being reviewed to reflect the changes made in the school/residence since the appointment of the a new headteacher and the changes in the practices)
3	Health and well being
3.5	Specific therapeutic techniques are used only: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ where there is a clear and widely accepted theoretical basis or evidence base underpinning their effectiveness; ■ with the continuing agreement of the child's responsible authority or a person with parental responsibility, and of the child concerned where the child has sufficient understanding to make an informed decision. ■ where specialist professionals (such as medical, legal, educationalists,

	psychologists, therapists) are professionally qualified and, where applicable, registered by the appropriate professional body. (This is in relation to staff being properly trained and qualified to deliver such therapeutic techniques and appropriately registered with a professional body to do so)
5	Residential accommodation
5.1	Suitable sleeping accommodation is provided for children. It is well organised and managed with risk assessments undertaken and the findings acted upon to reduce risk for all children. (This is in relation to no thumb key locks being fitted on bedroom doors to enable children and young people's privacy whilst maintaining their safety.)
5.4	Accommodation is appropriately lit, heated and ventilated, cleaned and maintained, and reasonable adjustments are made to provide adequate accessible accommodation for any children with restricted mobility. The accommodation contains suitable specialist facilities to support children whose disabilities require them. (This is in relation to bedrooms and bathrooms requiring refurbishment and redecoration, some bedrooms having office type strip lighting, some bathrooms not being heated sufficiently)
5.7	Residential accommodation is reserved for the use of those children designated to use it, and is protected from access by unauthorised persons. (This is in relation to children and young people not being able to secure their bedroom doors for privacy, whilst staff on duty are able to access the room if necessary)
5.8	Any use of surveillance equipment (e.g. door alarms and audio monitors) or patrolling of school buildings or grounds for security purposes does not intrude unreasonably on children's privacy. (This is in relation to door alarms and audio monitors, which are used as a blanket approach for all children and young people, not being individually risk assessed as being a necessity)
6	Safety of children
6.2	The school premises, accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of children are ensured. (This is in relation to pull cords for light and other fittings in the residence bathrooms, old radiator fittings protruding from the floors and are trip hazards)
9	Personal possessions
9.3	Reasonable protection is provided for children's personal possessions and for any children's money or valuables looked after by the school. (This is in relation to personal possessions and valuables being available to the young people in their rooms, but safely secured)
10	Activities and free time
10.3	Children are encouraged and enabled to make and sustain friendships with children outside the school, which may involve friends visiting the school and reciprocal arrangements to visit friends' homes.
12	Promoting positive behaviour and relationships
12.4	Methods to de-escalate confrontations or potentially challenging behaviour are used wherever appropriate to avoid use of restraint, including reasonable force.

	<p>(This is in relation to restraint holds being used and the methods for de-escalation not being recorded on the record of restraint prior to it being used)</p> <p>Restraint, including reasonable force, is only used in exceptional circumstances, to prevent injury to any person, including the child, or to prevent serious damage to the property of any person, including the child's, or to prevent the child leaving the school's premises where this may lead to the child injuring themselves or others. Restraint in relation to a child must be necessary and proportionate. (This is in relation the evidence for the necessity of the use of restraint, which must be recorded on the record of restraint, this should then be part of the risk assessment also.)</p>
12.5	All children and staff are given an opportunity to discuss with a relevant adult (who was not directly involved) within 24 hours incidents of restraint, including reasonable force, they have been involved in, witnessed or been affected by. (This is in relation to electronic records of restraint not showing the views of staff, children and young people who are restrained, or those who may also witness a restraint being recorded on the record of restraint)
12.6	Children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records. The school regularly reviews any instances of the use of reasonable force and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice. (This is in relation to records of restraint not showing young people's views, or how learning gained from a record of restraint informs risk assessments for children and young people)
12.8	Staff working within the school know and implement the school's policy, and where relevant the local authority's policy, in relation to children going missing and their role in implementing that policy. Staff actively search for children who are missing, including working with the police where appropriate. (This is in relation to staff being given guidance and training informing them of the schools policy and the local police protocol on managing children and young people who go missing or who are absent without permission)
13	Leadership and management
13.1	The school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school, and takes appropriate action where necessary. (This is in relation to the oversight of leadership and management and the absence of recording of independent visitor reports by them when conducting this function)
13.6	Staff with management responsibilities have an adequate level of experience or training in the management and practice of boarding to ensure that children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted. (This is in relationship to appropriate training for all staff including governors, being accessed to enable them to fulfil their roles within the Leadership and Management of the school)
15	Staff deployment and supervision of children
15.1	There is a sufficient number of competent staff deployed appropriately, both as a staff group and on individual shifts, to fulfil the school's Statement of Purpose and meet the individual needs of all children resident in the school. (This is in relation to the numbers of appropriately qualified staff caring for children and young people being insufficient)
15.2	Records of staff working in the school demonstrate sufficient competent staff are deployed and that contingency plans are in place in the event of a shortfall in

	staffing levels.(This is in relation to their being no contingency for staffing shortfalls)
15.6	The school's procedures are compatible with the local runaway and missing from home and care (RMFHC) protocols and procedures applicable to the area where the school is located. Where children placed out of authority go missing, the head of care (or school equivalent) follows the local RMFHC protocol and complies with and makes staff aware of any other processes required by the placing authority. (This is in relation to staff being given guidance and training informing them of the schools policy and the local police protocol on managing children and young people who go missing or who are absent without permission)
15.8	The arrangements for deploying staff facilitate continuity of care for individual children, and maximise children's choices of staff members to provide their personal care, where appropriate. The school can demonstrate that, as far as is possible, children are able to choose who provides their personal care. (This is in relation to there being sufficient qualified staff on duty who provide key work roles for children and young people, and that they are able where appropriate to choose who this is)
17	Securing children's views
17.1	Children have an opportunity to contribute their views to the operation of residential provision, are able to raise concerns and make complaints, and their views are given appropriate weight in decisions about the running of the school. Children are not penalised for raising a concern or making a complaint in good faith. (This is in relation to young people reporting that they do not feel that suggestions they make are taken seriously or that there is a way that they do this anonymously)
17.2	Active steps are taken to enable all children to make their views known, to make everyday choices and to maximise their opportunities to develop independence. The school should not assume that any child is unable to communicate their views. (This is in relation to electronic records of restraint and records of missing not being offered to children and young people to make their views known and have them recorded, that some may require the assistance of an independent advocate to support with this)
18	Complaints
18.2	The school's written record of complaints identifies those complaints relating to residential provision, and action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). (This is in relation to complaints in the residence being differentiated from those in the education setting)
19	Staff supervision, training and support
19.2	All existing care staff have attained a relevant minimum level 3 qualification or have qualifications which demonstrate the same competencies. All new staff engaged from the commencement of these Standards hold these qualifications or begin working towards them within 3 months of confirmation of employment. (This is in relation to all existing core staff having a minimum level 3 qualification from 1 April 2015)
19.5	Any social workers and other specialist professionals (e.g. medical, legal, educational, psychologists, therapists) are professionally qualified and, where applicable, registered by the appropriate professional body. They are

	appropriately trained to work with children and their families, and have a good understanding of residential child care and the policies and purpose of the school. (This is in relation to the employment of staff who working in specialist roles who are not appropriately qualified or registered with an appropriate professional body)
20	Monitoring by independent visitors
20.1	The governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school arrange for one of their number, or a representative who does not work at, or directly manage, the school, to visit the school once every half term and complete a written report on the conduct of the school. Where the school has an individual proprietor, that person may carry out such visits personally if they are not also the Headteacher (or school equivalent). (This is in relation to there being no written evidence of independent visits preceding September 2015)
20.3	Written reports of all monitoring visits are provided to the Headteacher (or school equivalent) and where applicable the governing body, organisation, or partnership. Reports are also provided to each member of that body (or the appropriate committee of that body), within two weeks and as written by the visitor without amendment or summary. (This is in relation to the original reports not being submitted within the 2 week period as described)
22	Records
22.1	Every child has an accurate, permanent record of their history and progress which can be read by the child at any time (except where the data controller is not obliged to supply the information to the child), and add personal statements or statements correcting errors. (This is in relation to a central core record being accessible to the child or young person at any time, this is not the case at the moment as all records are electronic and segregated).

Information about this inspection

The inspection of the residential provision took place within half a day's notice of the announcement. Over a period of three days inspectors reviewed the policies, documentation, residential provision and residential arrangements. They consulted key staff, young people and external professionals. The inspection observed the practices of staff and care provided. Scrutiny of key records and safeguarding procedures was made as part of the inspection process.

Inspection team

Mr Chris Golbourn	Lead social care inspector
Mr Steve Lowe	Social care regulatory inspection manager

Full Report

Information about this school

This residential special school caters for 35 boys and girls aged 9 to 16 years old. At the current time the boarding accommodation is divided into four separate house areas over two wings of the main house. This arrangement provides smaller group living. 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 a market town in Gloucestershire. The residential provision was last inspected in December 2014.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Requires improvement

In September 2015 a new headteacher was appointed. Following her appointment there is now a clearer focus and direction to improve the quality of services that children and young people receive. Robust internal reviews, commissioned by the headteacher, have identified a number of deficits in the national minimum standards for residential special schools (NMS). As a result, the headteacher commenced an action and improvement plan. Some areas for improvement have been remedied, and others are ongoing and require further attention. The headteacher, leadership team and staff teams have a shared ethos towards meeting the needs of the children and young people and what is required to improve services for them.

Changes made by the headteacher to the school and residential staff system, result in a clearer understanding of individual and collective responsibilities. However, there are an insufficient number of qualified staff to allow for contingency planning. As a result, progress has not yet been made in response to all of the areas of care identified on the action and improvement plan.

Similarly a breach of the minimum standard that states that therapeutic input must only be provided by a therapist with the appropriate qualification was identified by the new headteacher. The impact on children and young people is a decrease in the range of therapeutic input available.

The internal condition of the building where children and young people sleep, bathe and socialise requires improvement. Light switches in bathrooms need reviewing to ensure they are suitable. The paintwork throughout the accommodation looks tired, and is particularly poor in the children and young people's bathrooms and bedrooms. Some bathrooms are cold and there are mould/damp patches in shower cubicles. Disconnected radiator pipes protrude through the floors in some corridors causing a health and safety hazard. These deficits detract from the work of the staff in encouraging children and young people to have higher self-worth and respect for their living areas.

Members of care staff do not differentiate bedtime and night-time routines for children and young people according to their age and individual ability. Bedtime routines are too

rigidly applied and include the blanket use of bedroom door alarms and listening devices to monitor children and young people. Members of staff have not individually assessed the need for these intrusive monitoring arrangements. Bedroom doors do not have the facility to be locked from the inside, while still being accessible to staff from the outside. As a result, the privacy of children and young people is compromised. The headteacher recognises this weakness and is taking steps to deal with it.

The headteacher and staff team cannot comprehensively evidence the impact of their consultation with children and young people. As a result, children and young people's views on improving the services provided for them is impaired. Staff have recognised this shortfall and are taking action to improve consultation with children and young people.

Care and education staff work well together, they share key information about children and young people. External partners from other agencies report that communication and work with them since September 2015 has also improved. A social worker says, 'when 'X' started at the school communication was not great and we could not get answers to our enquiries. This has greatly improved, information is shared well, reports are sent in for meetings, and safeguarding concerns are well informed, this was not always the case.'

Since September 2015 some children and young people's attendance at school and their academic progress has improved. Some have made considerable progress in these areas in a relatively short period of time. Recent improvements can also be measured by a reduction of missing or absent without permission incidents; no exclusions from school; and in the residential areas, low levels of restraint. Staff have high ambitions for the children and young people.

The quality of care and support

Requires improvement

Children and young people are not able to view or comment on their individual care plans easily. There is an electronic system and consequently, they cannot add personal statements or their views about their care. This lack of emphasis on young people's views is also reflected in the records of missing episodes and restraint. As a result, children and young people's views on their care and the learning obtained from them to inform practice, risk management and care planning is lost. This is evident by one young person's feedback on the use of waking night staff and electronic bedroom door alarms; 'I don't need staff watching me all the time....at night I don't need an alarm... I don't need someone knowing when I am going to the toilet'. These approaches to monitoring children and young people are not individually assessed.

The residential accommodation is in old, listed buildings. The internal décor is generally dated and requires improvement. The children and young people's bedrooms are poorly decorated. Some rooms have previously been used as offices and strip lighting is still present. Children and young people have no secure storage in their rooms for keeping personal items. The residential provision has been recently reorganised and is not in

keeping with the schools statement of purpose. As a result, information for prospective placing local authorities is out of date.

The children and young people told inspectors that they do not have reliable internet access to enable them to maintain adequate social and support networks. They do have some internet access and computer usage in the school during evenings to support homework. However, they do not have access to the internet for personal use or leisure activities or for any private study. As a result, many of the children and young people say they feel disconnected from contacts outside of the school.

The children and young people access a variety of evening recreational activities of their choice, this includes group walks and sports activities such as football, swimming or cycling, sharing films in the residence or a trip to the cinema. As a result, they are encouraged by members of the care team to participate in group activities and develop their social skills. However, direct contact with friends outside of the school and residences and any reciprocal visits is limited. Therefore children and young people's social contact is restricted.

Good examples of staff treating children and young people with dignity and respect were observed by inspectors. An example inspectors saw of this care was a young person wishing to complain about a peers behaviour being given private time with staff to explain how this affected him. Staff listened carefully and sensitively. They then advised him on strategies to manage this situation. The observed care and support children and young people receive from staff was sensitive and responsive. Staff member's knowledge of the individual child or young person is good. A professional working with the home says, 'the partnership working with the school is positive now, staff share good information about the young people and they put the young people first'.

The catering for children and young people in the residential setting is provided through kitchens in each house staffed by a resident cook. Healthy eating is promoted, and the meals provided are nourishing and well balanced. Food is of a high quality, varied and plentiful. Individual dietary requirements are catered for. One young person says 'the food is good, but I prefer what I have at home, it's not so strict.' Children and young people respond well to good daily routines around mealtimes. Consequently, they benefit from opportunities to develop their independence skills and social interaction with others. Conversation around the table is led by the children and young people, and staff exhibit good parenting, modelling positive behaviours and communication. As a result, mealtimes are a shared social experience which children and young people learn from positive role models.

The teams work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement. Not all children and young people's individual risk assessments comprehensively consider key hazards. For example, vulnerability in relation to self-harm, prevention of repeat restraints and missing episodes are not fully considered. These assessments have previously been completed by a staff member who is not appropriately qualified to undertake this role. The headteacher has taken action to remedy this weakness. However, some assessments do not inform staff of a clear analysis of risk. As a result, some children and young people are not as protected from predictable risks as they could be.

The perimeter of the grounds is not sufficiently secure. The headteacher recognises this weakness and has a plan to improve the site security. At the current time, the security of the grounds presents a risk to young people's safety both in relation to the risk of going off site and of unauthorised people accessing the car parks, playground and the surrounding buildings.

Some physical areas of the residence present as hazardous to children and young people. On some landings leading from bedrooms to bathrooms, there are decommissioned pipes for radiators protruding from the floor boards. All of the bathrooms in the residence have pull cord light switches and some have electronic ventilation systems which operate in the same way. These present as a risk to children and young people. As a result, children and young people may injure themselves.

An omission of children and young people being able to access an independent advocate following a missing episode is identified in the generally comprehensive safeguarding policies. Similarly, the policies do not include recording the young people's views following incidents of missing or restraint. Staff say that they understand the need for restraint is a last resort. They have managed some very difficult and dangerous situations well. However, capturing and recording feedback from young people after an intervention or incident is still not happening routinely. As a result of not recording their views, wishes and feelings, risk assessment and preventative care planning is not properly informed.

Children and young people frequently go missing or are absent without permission from the site. This is as a result of unsecure perimeters and access points. Staff follow the local protocol and look for missing children and young people in the local community. When children and young people return to the home, no independent return interviews take place. Staff do debrief the young person, but, this does not follow statutory guidance. Staff interviewed are unfamiliar with statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care (RMFHC). As a result, children and young people are not offered independent discussion on the push and pull factors of why they went missing or how to prevent this from reoccurring.

An independent person has not been identified for children and young people to address their concerns to. The details for the schools independent visitor are visible on notice boards, but, there are no direct contact details included. This person's role is not that of the independent person as they also play a part in the monitoring and governance of the

school.

The majority of child protection incidents are dealt with effectively. School leaders consult appropriately with other agencies, including the local authority designated officer (LADO), children's services, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and the police. As a result, school staff are able to provide timely and helpful advice to children and young people and families.

There is a named and designated lead for safeguarding. The recording systems used are difficult to follow as they are compiled from several different sources. They lack a clear chronological overview which makes them difficult to navigate. Consequently, records can be confusing for staff to understand.

Staff are trained in safeguarding and child protection. There is an effective policy for preventing and managing bullying. Children and young people have confidence in the staff's ability to take appropriate action. Staff tackle issues swiftly and effectively. Reports are collated on bullying incidents; however, notes are very brief, this impacts on the analysis of incidents, the assessment of risks, patterns and trends to inform preventative work.

Improvements have been made in staff recruitment and selection procedures. Generally, this means that staff are now recruited safely. The headteacher has undertaken a recent comprehensive review of staff files to ensure that all are complete and up-to-date. As a result, all new staff are appropriately checked against the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and existing staff have been re-checked.

The staff team carefully consider which children and young people share bedrooms with each other. Children and young people, and parents and carers are consulted. Children and young people from different age groups do not share bedrooms.

The children and young people report that they feel safe living in the residence and that if they have any worries they will talk to the staff. One young person says, 'they do take care of me here, if I have anything going wrong, I tell them and they try to do something about it'. Staff were observed to engage with the children and young people well, responding to them individually and promptly.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement

Since the previous inspection a new headteacher has been appointed, who is well qualified and experienced in the leadership and management of residential special schools. She is making a positive difference to the quality of service provided and recognises the need for further improvements.

Staff members cannot find written reports of independent monitoring visits of the residences prior to September 2015. Reports for the visits occurring since September 2015 have not been provided to the governing body within two weeks of their

completion. As a result, the governors of the school do not have a precise enough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the residential provision. Consequently, the overall level of challenge from the governing body has been insufficiently rigorous.

Records of staff supervision have not been stored safely prior to the appointment of the new headteacher. As a result, this could place children, young people and staff at risk. The headteacher has rectified this omission and good detailed reflective records are now kept. However, annual appraisals of care staff are lacking rigour and quality, and require improvement.

There is a statement of principles and practice that outlines the aims of the school. It does not clearly state the many changes that have been made to the residential provision since the change of leadership. Consequently, placing authorities are not provided with accurate information about the services and facilities that the school provides.

An action and improvement plan, informed following two independent reviews of the quality of education and care, is being further developed by the leadership team. Further work to rectify the weaknesses identified at this inspection, is to be included in this action and improvement plan.

Staffing shortfalls do exist and 25% of residential staff are not level 3 qualified. These shortfalls have impacted upon the capacity of the management team to make the changes they have identified as necessary and to action further areas for improvement.

Staff members say they have felt the positive impact of the changes made since September 2015 and that there is a new focus on improved outcomes for children and young people. Staff also say that colleagues have left or their roles have changed and this has been unsettling. However, they feel well supported by their managers, reporting recent improvements in the frequency of supervisions, and access to training as particularly supportive.

The leadership and management team have developed improved working relationships with external professionals. One professional says, 'we have good working relationships with the new headteacher, it is clear she is leading a culture of change in the school, focused on improved outcomes for children and young people.'

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	115812
Social care unique reference number	SC040533
DfE registration number	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.

Type of school	Residential Special School
Number of boarders on roll	32
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	9 to16
Headteacher	Debra Henderson
Date of previous boarding inspection	05/12/2014
Telephone number	01285 712308
Email address	

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