

# Notton House School

Notton House School, 28 Notton, Lacock, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 2NF

## Inspection dates

9 March 2016 to 11 March 2016

## The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

The quality of care and support

Good 2

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

- Not all national minimum standards are met. Improvements are required in relation to behaviour management. Records do not provide sufficient information to confirm that physical intervention and restricting young people in 'safe zones' is warranted.
- Rules in place require young people to seek permission from staff before accessing their accommodation and the school grounds. This approach does not provide young people with a homely atmosphere.
- There has been significant investment and improvement in the residential accommodation, particularly the development of the two independence houses. However, the access restrictions for young people across the school site should be reviewed.
- Young people make good progress academically, socially and personally as a result of increased activities that they access on site and in the local community. Young people receive individualised care from a well-trained and committed staff team and strong, effective relationships are evident.
- The changes to the senior management team has driven forward improvements at the school. Two important improvements include an increase in care staff and the introduction of the learning mentors. Young people are very positive about these changes, as are the staff team.
- Leaders and managers have developed an effective admission procedure that supports the young people to settle quickly at the school and to move on to the

next stage of their lives positively.

### **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 has failed to meet national minimum standards 12, 13 and 22.

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

#### **The school must meet the following national minimum standards.**

- Ensure staff receive appropriate training and support to recognise and deal with incidents of challenging behaviour or bullying. This training should include assistance in managing staff members' responses and feelings arising from working with children who have emotional difficulties which result in challenging behaviour. Staff training is regularly refreshed (national minimum standard 12.3).
- Ensure a written record is kept of major sanctions and the use of any reasonable force. Records include the information in Appendix 2 (use of reasonable force). The record is made within 24 hours and is legible. 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 (national minimum standard 12.6).
- Ensure the school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met (national minimum standard 13.4).
- Ensure the records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate (national minimum standard 13.8).
- Ensure the issues specified in Appendix 3 are monitored, and action taken to improve outcomes for children as appropriate (national minimum standard 13.9).
- Ensure each child's file includes the information in Appendix 2 (individual records) (national minimum standard 22.2).

## Information about this inspection

The school was given three hours' notice of this inspection. The inspectors reviewed the school's policies, procedures, records and associated documents. All of the residential accommodation was inspected. Some meals were taken with the young people. The inspectors observed the interactions between the young people as well as between the young people and the staff during the inspection. Meetings took place with the staff regarding their roles and areas of responsibility. Inspectors also met and had telephone conversations with the chair of governors and the safeguarding governor.

## Inspection team

Wendy Anderson	lead social care inspector
Janice Hawtin	social care inspector

# **Full Report**

## **Information about this school**

Notton House School is a maintained, residential special school operated by Bristol City Council. It is located in a rural area of Wiltshire. The school provides a 38-week per year educational provision for boys aged 9 to 19 years, who have behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. An increasing number of pupils have additional complex needs. All young people referred to the school have a statement of special educational needs. At the time of the inspection, there were 33 residential pupils. The residential accommodation is provided for pupils in seven distinct areas located on the school site. The residential provision was last inspected in July 2014.

## Inspection Judgements

### The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

### Requires improvement

Staff know and implement behaviour management strategies. The records of physical intervention require improvement. Staff do not record sufficient information to demonstrate that their use of restraint and 'safe zones' are necessary in light of the behaviours that the young people exhibit.

The majority of young people are prevented from accessing their accommodation and the school grounds when they wish to during care time without seeking permission from staff.

Young people make good personal and academic progress from their starting points at the school. They learn to develop respect and tolerance of one another. Parents and professionals agreed and gave positive feedback about the achievements of the young people.

Staff are skilled at developing effective relationships with the young people. They are trusted and respected by young people. A learning mentoring system has been developed and results in a more individualised approach to care that benefits young people.

Young people are supported to develop their confidence and social skills by participating in community activities. The range of external clubs and events that the young people access has increased since the last inspection. The quality of the residential accommodation has improved as a result of substantial investment in improving the decor and furnishings. Young people think the two large murals in the two stairwells are great.

The new management team and management structure benefits young people. The residential service is well organised and run. This is still a work in progress, but the improvement can be evidenced. Communication between the care and education staff has improved. This effective co-working provides young people with a better continuity of care.

Good health care arrangements ensures young people's physical, emotional and psychological health is well met. Young people are able to access a range of health specialists within the school as well as linking with external agencies. Learning mentors play a key role in supporting good health.

### The quality of care and support

### Good

Young people benefit from established, strong, positive relationships with the care staff. The staffs' knowledge of the young people and their associated needs is good. As a result, young people receive the support that they need to make good progress in all aspects of their lives.

The bespoke induction procedure helps young people to settle comfortably in to the school. The needs of families are taking in to account when offering a placement. A

detailed assessment is carried out once a referral has been made. The pace of the admission depends on the needs of the young person and is taken at a pace that is best for them. Staff said that this approach leads to the young person being more settled once they have moved in. As well as support from the care team, each newly admitted young person receives support from a learning support mentor.

A similar system is in place when the young people are leaving the school. To best prepare the young people for leaving the school. There are two independence houses in the school grounds. These provide young people with the opportunity to learn and practise their independence skills, such as budgeting, shopping for and cooking meals, not only for themselves but also for the other young people in the house. Staff have established links with further education colleges and other organisations to expand the range of options available for the young people when they leave their care.

Each young person has an individual placement plan in place. These are kept under review to ensure that they meet the young people's identified and emerging needs. These plans detail how the staff will meet the young people's needs, and help to provide consistency in the delivery of care. The plans link well to other documents such as risk assessment, behavioural plans and health plans.

Staff ensure that young people's healthcare needs are met. Each young person has a healthcare plan which is kept under review to ensure that it is up to date. Medication storage and records are suitable. Young people remain registered with their own doctor because of the residential provisions limited times of operation. The school doctor visits once a month, the school has employed a school nurse who works at the school once a week and an education psychologist regularly visits the school. A speech and language therapist has recently been recruited to work with some of the young people. Staff have developed a good working relationship with the local surgery, enabling the young people to access the services should they need to. The staff team support parents and carers where needed with the young people's medication and medical needs. In addition. Staff have links with external support services such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

Staff enable young people to take part in a very wide range of fun and purposeful activities. These contribute to the young people's well-being, personal and social development. The range of activities on offer has increased since the last inspection. Young people are taking part in a lot more community-based activities; these are further developing their social skills and social networks. Activities include local football clubs, boxing, rugby and martial arts. Young people spoken with talked proudly of their involvement in these activities. In addition, with the increase in staff number, there are more opportunities. Young people are able to maintain contact with their families. Currently, young people are not allowed to have mobile phones, this approach is being kept under review by the leadership and management team at the school.

Consultation systems with the young people are effective. There is a school council, which has effected change since the last inspection. Young people are encouraged to put forward their views during key worker and learning support worker sessions. There are also daily meetings with the young people in their accommodation groups. Notes are maintained of these, but it is unclear as to what purpose these meetings hold.

The staff work with the young people on developing their understanding of equal opportunities and diversity. On noticeboards around the school there is information

related to these subjects, including sexuality, tolerance and respect. Work is also undertaken in key worker sessions and learning support sessions on these subjects.

Catering at the school is of a good standard. Catering staff gather views from the young people on their likes and dislikes as well as ensuring that the young people's dietary needs are catered for.

## **How well children and young people are protected**

### **Requires improvement**

Behaviour management records at the school require improvement. Records of physical intervention do not consistently contain enough detail about the behaviours which led to the intervention. In some records, staff use vague language such as 'threatening' or 'aggressive'. They do not tell the story of the event, so it is not possible to say if the level of physical intervention used was warranted or if it was the minimum force used for the minimal amount of time. Debriefing discussions with the staff are not recorded. There is no evidence of learning from the monitoring of restraint records.

The school has three 'safe zones'. Two in the education part of the school, which have doors, and one in the lower school, which does not have a door. These have been added since the last inspection. Inspectors focused on the use of the 'safe zone' located in the lower school. Records on the use of these rooms linked with incident records need to improve as they have the same shortfall as the physical intervention records. In addition, in the records sampled, three did not record the time that the young person left the room. In each of the young people's individual behaviour plans it states that the 'safe zone' can be used. It does not state under what individual circumstances. Managers should review the use of these rooms in relation to risk assessment and against the impact of restricting the liberty of young people.

Managers have recently reviewed their missing person protocol. The length of time before a young person is reported missing has been reduced. This has been amended in light of the needs of the current young people placed at the school. Upon return, the staff strive for an independent interview to take place with the young person, but this is not consistently happening.

Access across the school, external and internal, is controlled using swipe cards. A small number of the young people have swipe cards, which allow them access to their accommodation and some communal spaces. The majority of the young people do not have these cards. They can only gain access to their accommodation areas by requesting this from the staff. Access to external space requires the young people to get permission from the staff. Managers should review the number of locked doors with a view to expanding access rights to young people.

Staff act promptly to address bullying issues. All of the young people involved are given one-to-one support and, where needed, group work takes place. The learning mentors have a key role in this work; including anti-bullying work as part of their personal, social and health education sessions. Incidents of bullying had decreased in terms three and four of this academic year. Young people spoken to said that the staff team quickly sort out any bullying.

Safeguarding procedures are in place and adhered to in practice. These are in-line with the local and Bristol's safeguarding procedures. Records relating to safeguarding

concerns contain the required information and there is evidence of practice being developed in light of safeguarding events.

The school has a full-time member of staff with responsibility for health and safety. This includes fire safety and risk assessments. Records demonstrate that appropriate checks and fire drills are carried out as required. Risk assessments are kept up to date, and identify hazards and strategies to reduce and address these.

Staff recruitment is well managed and protects the young people from adults who may wish to cause them harm.

## **The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers**

### **Requires improvement**

Managers have not consistently ensured that standards are met. At this inspection three national minimum standards are not met.

Monitoring systems at the school have been reviewed and improved since the last inspection, but they have not identified the shortfalls noted in this report. Governors regularly visit the school and carry out monitoring visits. The school has a suitable policy and procedure for dealing with complaints. Young people spoken to said that they knew how to make a complaint and felt that this would be taken seriously by the staff. The feedback to the young people on the outcome of complaints has improved, but the record of the outcomes do not consistently record if a complainant is happy with the outcome of the complaint investigation.

Since the last inspection, there has been a change of the leaders and managers at the school. In addition, there has been a significant increase in the number of care staff. This has led to staff being able to do a lot more individual work as well as enabling the young people to access a wider range of activities in small groups. The staff team is very positive about the future of the school. They see the changes in management and developments in the staffing structure as being beneficial for all.

Staff feel very well supported managers at the school. Good developments have been made to facilitate improved communication between school and care staff, this has benefitted young people. As well as informal support, staff receive regular formal supervision and have annual appraisals. Information from these meetings is used to develop staff practice and inform the staff training programme.

The school statement of principles and practice reflects current practices at the school. The school's website provides the public with useful information on the services that the school offers and provides access to the school policies.

## 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 exceed the standard of good and result 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	109394
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC039112
<b>DfE registration number</b>	801/7015

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>	Residential special school
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	32
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Boys
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	9 to 19
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Peter Evans
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	19 June 2014
<b>Telephone number</b>	01249 730407
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin.nottonhouse@bristol.gov.uk">admin.nottonhouse@bristol.gov.uk</a>

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