

Lonsdale School

Brittain Way, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG2 8UT

Inspection dates

03/11/2015 to 05/11/2015

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

- Deployment of staff is poor; the lack of contingency staff can impact on the quality of the residential experience.
- The management and de-escalation of behavioural incidents lacks strategy and skill.
- There is currently no independent listener in post.
- Activities do not provide a stimulating range of opportunities and there is little engagement with the local community.
- The provision of evening meals does not provide enough choice or good nutritional balance.
- Complaints are not managed effectively; the records do not clearly demonstrate responses to and outcomes of complaints.
- Policies are generic and require updating to ensure there is clear guidance for staff, specifically regarding recruitment procedures and complaints.
- Care plans, although under review, contain minimal information and lack detail.
- Safeguarding arrangements in the school are effective.
- The senior management team are strongly committed to improvement and focused

on facilitating change.

- Internal assessment against the National Minimum Standards has taken place. Monitoring of the provision is good and drives improvement.
- The majority of young people and parents cite the residential experience as extremely positive. They are complimentary about the accommodation, the staff and the academic provision.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- The school identifies at least one person other than a parent, outside the staff, and those responsible for the leadership and governance of the school who children may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at the school. This person may be known as the 'independent person'. Children are informed who this person is, and how to contact them and they are easily accessible. Children are also provided with one or more appropriate helpline(s) or outside contact numbers, including the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England, to ring in case of problems or distress NMS 2.2
- All children, including those with special dietary, medical or religious needs, are provided with meals which are adequate in nutrition, quantity, quality, choice and variety NMS 8.1
- Children develop their emotional, intellectual, social, creative and physical skills through the accessible and stimulating environment created by the school. Children are supported to take part in school based and out of school activities NMS 10.1
- 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 NMS 15.2
- The school has, and follows, an appropriate policy on recording and responding to complaints that is compliant with the relevant regulatory requirements NMS 18.1
- Staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children as they relate to the purpose of the setting. Training keeps them up-to-date with professional, legal and practice developments and reflects the policies, legal obligations and business needs of the school NMS 19.1

Points for improvement

- Update and develop the care plans to provide a detailed focus on the residential needs of young people
- Continue to review policies to fully reflect the school's purpose and ensure that policies are implemented and understood by staff.

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out by two inspectors within four hours of telephone notification to the school and took place over three days. Discussions with staff, health professionals and parents informed the inspection judgments alongside scrutiny of documents, records and surveys. Feedback from the parents and the designated safeguarding officer at the local authority and nine Parent View responses were obtained prior to and during the inspection.

Inspection team

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Deirdra Keating | Lead social care inspector |
| Fiona Littlefield | Social care inspector |

Full Report

Information about this school

Lonsdale School is a local authority maintained residential special school for pupils who have a range of physical and neurological impairments. The school is funded for 85 places with up to 26 residential pupils aged 11-18 years. The school is co-located with a secondary school in Stevenage. Residential accommodation is purpose-built and provided in flats contained centrally in the school. Currently, there are 39 young people who use the provision. The last inspection of the school took place in October 2014.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Requires improvement

Young people who attend the school have physical and neurological impairments and some young people may have learning difficulties. Staff utilise many different communication aids to support young people to make their views known and understand their requests. The majority of young people enjoy the residential experience. Feedback from parents is generally positive. However, a number of National Minimum Standards are unmet. Some of which impact on the quality of young people's overall experience.

Staff usually make young people aware of who to contact for support and provide them with the details of an independent listener connected to the school. This helps young people identify an adult they are able to approach. However, there is not currently an independent listener in post. The school are in the process of appointing a new independent listener, although there has been a gap for a number of weeks. As a result, young people have not had a person independent of the school or their parents to raise issues or concerns with.

Young people are animated about staying at the school. They enjoy electronic gaming, watching television and making use of the school facilities including the art room and games hall. Staff do not always follow activity programmes, they rely largely on 'free time' where young people use electronic screens for entertainment. Some young people require intensive personal care time, which limits the activities offered to others. This does not consistently provide responsive support to the individual needs of the young people.

Young people are developing independent skills, which will support them as they grow into adulthood. One parent said: 'She has really gained in confidence; there is a long way to go but she has loads of friends now and is learning to assert herself. She has also developed skills in dressing.'

Staff work well with nursing staff to contribute to the overall objective of helping young people develop independence skills, including personal hygiene and self-medicating. Nursing staff work around activities or trips and make sure that medical needs do not limit young people. Building and supporting young people's independence takes precedence, in preparation for adult life.

The quality of care and support

Requires improvement

Induction to the residential provision is good. Young people who are new to the school are introduced in a careful and sensitive way, which takes account of their individual needs. Staff support young people to settle, by offering introductory tea visits. Staff

build young people's confidence and resilience in staying away from home. There are generally opportunities for young people to mingle, choose activities and make friends, although activities can be limited by staff deployment.

Care plans are currently being developed to provide a more cohesive and integrated system, which reflects the needs and views of the young people in relation to the residential provision. This is recognised by the Head of Residence and is part of the ongoing development of the provision. Currently, the plans contain minimal information and lack detail.

The accommodation is comfortable, clean and well maintained. The equipment is designed to support young people and enhance accessibility and mobility. However, poor deployment of staff hinders young people's movements within the accommodation because of the need for direct supervision to support mobility.

Young people are offered activities that are usually based in the residential flats or using school premises. There is an over-reliance on board games, tablets, and television, known as 'free time'. Young people are sometimes taken out by staff using school transport and clearly enjoy this. These opportunities are limited and young people seldom participate in community based activities. Parents spoken to say that they feel young people could do more.

Meal times provide social opportunities where staff eat with young people. Lunch and breakfast options are nutritionally balanced and adequate in choice and quantity. The evening meals do not offer vegetables or salad and little fresh fruit. Healthy choices are minimal and this does not support a healthy balanced diet.

Staff treat young people with respect and have good knowledge of each young person. They are treated as unique individuals. Staff recognise and celebrate young people's diversity and family background.

Health care arrangements are good. Recognition of young people's extreme vulnerability and support of their complex health needs is paramount. There is a robust system for dispensing medication. The medical team offers 24 hour care and there are clear arrangements for liaising with parents and the community paediatrician. This ensures that young people receive good health care by dedicated professionals. Staff are trained in emergency procedures that reflect young people's needs and ensure quick responses when needed.

Staff support young people to contact parents and family members during their stays. Staff facilitate two-way communication with parents who feel that their concerns are responded to quickly. Parents report their satisfaction with the service that their children are getting, feeling that they have gained in confidence and assertiveness.

How well children and young people are protected

Requires

improvement

Generally, recruitment checks are adequate, although the reference checks require clearer timescales. Files are organised and there are systems in place to ensure checks are followed up. However, the policy fails to clearly set out the detail of pre-employment checks and does not fully support the safer recruitment training.

There were no physical interventions since the last inspection. They are very rare in residential time. Staff are all trained in specific steps to provide interventions when required. Despite this, positive behaviour management is not consistently promoted, as staff are not all competent in managing individuals. Records of incidents demonstrate that some staff are uncertain about how to manage some young people. Some records show that staff cast some young people in a negative light. Staff do not reflect on their individual responses or consider their approach, showing a lack of knowledge and skill.

Young people appear comfortable and relaxed in the residential accommodation. They are not unsettled by visitors and have a rapport with trusted staff using a number of communication aids.

Safeguarding is paramount in the school and given a high profile. Designated trained safeguarding staff are known throughout the school. Clear reporting demonstrates staff follow up concerns immediately using established reporting procedures. This protects young people from potential harm. The safeguarding policy reflects the local county model and provides some guidance.

Young people are very unlikely to go missing from the provision. The environment is situated centrally within the school, where all the exits are monitored. Risk assessments enable young people to take part in activities that are deemed risky and ensure that potential dangers are recognised and prevented.

There are regular fire drills that are carried out with care to ensure they do not cause unnecessary stress to individuals. Staff know what to do in the event of a fire and each young person has a personal evacuation plan to guide staff clearly in the event of a fire.

The school has an onsite facilities management team. This ensures responses to repairs and maintenance are managed quickly and effectively. This promotes a safe and secure environment.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement

The residential provision is well led and managed. The Head of Residence is part of the senior leadership team. This provides an integrated approach, where academic and

residential staff work well together to support young people.

Although staffing has been increased recently, there remains a lack of contingency staff. Agency staff are seldom used and therefore known staff usually care for young people. There is an increase in numbers of young people and managers are available on each shift to provide cover and support. However, this is not utilised by staff, resulting in young people's requests to move around the residential environment being refused. This does not provide a stimulating environment where young people are supported to exercise choice.

Staff receive the training that meets minimum requirements. This does not equip some staff with the skills to consistently manage challenging behaviour. A large part of the care provided is personal and mobility based and, as a result, staff have become deskilled in de-escalating incidents, lacking confidence and skill. This does not demonstrate a reflective approach to helping young people recognise and manage their responses to pressures and stress.

The complaints procedure and policy require updating. The policy has incorrect details and it is unclear what constitutes a complaint. There is no process for grumbles as such. Managers investigate formal complaints but these are held within the school and there is no separate record for the residential provision. This does not provide a transparent overview of concerns about the provision.

The policies are under review; however, a number have yet to be reviewed. These remain dated and are more representative of the local authority protocols. Staff do not all understand or consistently implement the policies. This was demonstrated during an audit of records and discussions with staff. While this causes no impact for young people, these are unclear and at times contradictory.

Monitoring of the residential provision is good. This is carried out by the Head of Residence, Governing Body and Governors. Reports by governors demonstrate critique and questioning that suggest improvements in practice. The review conducted by the head of residence highlights areas for improvements and replicates the inspection findings. The report is comprehensive and realistic.

Staff receive regular supervision and challenge. Regular group clinical supervision meetings enable staff to have their say and voice concerns; the senior management team responds fully. Dialogue includes challenge to attitude and addressing barriers to change. This demonstrates a commitment to change and improvement.

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 | 117679 |
| Social care unique reference number | SC056425 |
| DfE registration number | |

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 | 39 |
| Gender of boarders | Mixed |
| Age range of boarders | 11 to 18 |
| Headteacher | Annemari Ottridge |
| Date of previous boarding inspection | 23/10/2014 |
| Telephone number | 01438 726999 |
| Email address | admin@Lonsdale.herts.sch.uk |

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.gov.uk/ofsted." If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email 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 or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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.

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
W: www.gov.co.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2015

