

Potterspurvy Lodge School

Potterspurvy Lodge School, Potterspurvy Lodge, Towcester, Northamptonshire NN12 7LL

Inspection dates	13/09/2016 to 15/09/2016	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Good	2
The quality of care and support	Good	2
How well children and young people are protected	Good	2
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- Children and young people like their school. They enjoy a range of activities on the school site and in the local and extended community.
- Children and young people make good progress, particularly with regard to their education, independence and social skills, and emotional health.
- Consultation with children and young people is part of the culture of the school. They feel listened to.
- Children and young people have good access to a therapy team which includes a psychologist, a speech and language therapist and an occupational therapist.
- The school works in partnership with parents and external professionals to provide consistent, holistic care across all areas of the child's life.
- Children and young people feel safe. Staff implement good procedures to keep them safe. Staff are starting to build warm and supportive relationships with children and young people. This helps them to feel safe and secure.
- There is a strong leadership team that provides good support to a qualified and caring staff team. The leadership team understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have plans to address shortfalls. External monitoring offers good scrutiny and support. There is a culture of continual improvement within the school.
- The school has gone through a period of change that led to improvements in areas such as behaviour management and staff training. Some areas of improvement need

to embed into practice, such as restorative approaches and the way that sanctions are monitored; ensuring that routines are based on individual need; and continuing to promote good links between care, education and therapy teams.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to work with staff on consistent practice with regard to restorative approaches, ensuring that monitoring systems identify practice that can be improved.
- Continue to challenge weaker established practice so that routines are based on the needs of individual children and young people.
- Continue to promote effective communication between care, education and therapy staff.

Information about this inspection

This inspection was announced on the morning of the start of the inspection. The inspector visited the residential accommodation, spoke to residential pupils and staff, including key staff with responsibility for the residential provision. The inspector also observed practice in the residential provision and scrutinised school policies and records.

Inspection team

Joanne Vyas

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Potterspury Lodge School is an independent residential special school registered for up to 70 boys and girls aged eight to 19 years. The school offers termly and weekly boarding and day provision. The ownership of the school changed in June 2015. The large national provider now operating the school has commenced a programme of service development, including refurbishment of premises. Two upgraded houses are in operation, plus two independent living flats. There are currently seven residential pupils.

The school is situated in south Northamptonshire and caters for children and young people with Asperger's syndrome, high-functioning autism, complex needs and challenging behaviour.

The residential provision was last inspected by a social care inspector at a full inspection in March 2016.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

Children and young people like their school. They have appreciated the recent improvements and look forward to further improvements, such as work being completed by an external company to ensure good internet access.

Children and young people make good progress especially in their education, emotional health, social and independence skills. Staff know the children and young people well. A parent said: 'Staff do go above and beyond to get to know him.' Children and young people say that staff help them: 'If there is a problem they will help you if they can.'

Attendance in school is very good and achievement is generally above national expectations. Residential staff support children and young people within the school, thereby creating better links between care and education. Young people are supported to go on to college and are making good progress towards their qualifications.

Staff are starting to form warm and supportive relationships with children and young people. This is something they believe is important and strive to accomplish. For example, staff took children and young people on a picnic at the beginning of term to help strengthen relationships and build trust.

Children and young people have good opportunities to practise their independence skills in relation to their age. This work prepares them well for independent living.

Staff have access to a good training programme which includes safeguarding children, sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and preventing radicalisation. Policies and procedures provide staff with good information. This means staff have the skills and knowledge to ensure that children and young people feel safe and secure.

There is a strong management team which ensures the residential provision is well organised and there is a continual focus on improvement.

The quality of care and support

Good

Staff know the children and young people well. They provide support that is tailored to the needs of the individual. Children and young people have an active role in planning their care. For example, they are involved in formulating their care plans and risk assessments. However, some established practices exist within the residential provision that do not always take account of individual need. For example, a young person complained that bedtimes are early and not appropriate for his age. These practices are being challenged but were not resolved prior to term starting to ensure that children and young people had routines that respond to their individual needs from the start.

Parents feel involved in the care of their children. A parent said: 'The school has been brilliant. It's a joined-up service so everybody is talking to each other.' Parents receive regular updates: 'I get regular phone calls. I get weekly and sometimes daily updates.'

Parents feel very well consulted and they work in partnership with the school. A parent said: 'I am usually quite a critical person but my ideas have already been implemented. It's refreshing.'

Children and young people have access to in-house therapists including a clinical psychologist, occupational therapist and a speech and language therapist. Therapy, care and education staff are beginning to work closely with each other to formulate a more holistic, consistent approach towards children and young people. Additionally, therapists provide support for families. This ensures consistency across all areas of the child's life. Children and young people also have access to all other healthcare professionals, including mental health services.

There is a culture of consultation with children and young people. They feel listened to and know that staff will respond to their concerns, wishes and views. Children and young people are encouraged to use their natural abilities. For example, a young person is being encouraged to use his leadership skills by chairing the school council. This has helped him to take on board other people's views as well as challenge and extend his leadership skills.

Children and young people enjoy a range of activities. These range from on-site clubs such as scouts and sports to off-site activities such as cinema, walks, picnics, bowling and shopping. These activities help children and young people with their confidence and self-esteem. Some young people said that there are not enough activities available at weekends. However, planning for weekend activities shows that children and young people have good opportunities to get out and about at the weekends. For example, one young person regularly goes horse riding while another attends naval cadets.

Children and young people are given lots of opportunities to practise their independence skills. Younger children are encouraged to carry out household tasks such as doing their own laundry. Older young people are provided with flats where they cook for themselves at weekends, keeping to a reasonable budget. A young person said: 'I get £20 for food every weekend to cook independently: It's brilliant. That and my flat I absolutely love.' They can gain awards for the independence skills that they acquire. This helps children and young people to transition successfully to adulthood.

The new refurbished houses are much appreciated by children and young people. They are modern, clean and homely. Some rooms have ensuite facilities. Children and young people like their rooms and say that they can keep their property safe as rooms can be locked. Rooms are highly personalised with posters, photos and quilt covers. Some young people preferred to have their old furniture back in their rooms so this was provided, demonstrating that staff respond to their individual needs. They have access to large open spaces, a fishing lake and outdoor play equipment as well as school facilities such as the IT suite and gym.

There are good procedures to help children and young people stay safe. They say they feel safe. Staff have a good understanding of the school's safeguarding procedures. The designated safeguarding lead has a good relationship with external safeguarding agencies. For example, the local authority designated officer said: 'She will discuss cases prior to referral. They are one of our best in terms of contact. Communication is excellent.' All concerns identified by staff are acted on and good records are kept to ensure the safety of children and young people.

Children and young people do not go missing from this school because they feel safe and secure. Staff have good procedures to follow if pupils leave the school grounds without permission. Children and young people do not report bullying as an issue at this school. Concerns about bullying behaviour are quickly reported and resolved.

Positive behaviour is promoted. Staff are building strong relationships with the children and young people. Behaviour within the residential houses is generally good. Staff are starting to be more consistent in their practice when using sanctions. Staff will use restorative approaches to help children and young people to reflect on their behaviour and think about better ways of managing their own behaviour in the future. However, this approach is not yet fully embedded and some sanctions have been used that may not be as effective at helping the children and young people to manage their own behaviour. One example is the loss of a trip seven days after the incident. Although this sanction was signed off by a manager, there is no comment about the appropriateness of the sanction. A behaviour support manager has been employed this term to review practice and look at alternative strategies to manage behaviour that challenges. Furthermore, children and young people are starting to be involved in their own risk assessments and behaviour support plans. This helps them to have a better understanding of how to manage their own behaviour. Young people are able to talk about the progress they have made and attribute this to the help and support that staff have provided.

Staff are trained in de-escalation techniques and physical intervention. Physical intervention is rarely used in the residential provision as staff are very good at de-escalating situations. They have asked children and young people what should happen when they are feeling stressed and anxious. For example, a young person said he would want to leave the building and walk in the grounds. This ensures his behaviour doesn't escalate and he is able to calm quickly without incident. When physical intervention is used, it is used for appropriate reasons and for the shortest possible time. Physical intervention is used as a last resort.

Vetting procedures help to keep children and young people safe from unsuitable adults. Health and safety procedures, including for fire safety, help to keep children and young people safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is good because the residential provision is viewed as an integral part of the school. The acting head of care shares office space with other managers and is an active part of the senior management team. This ensures good communication.

The school has been through a period of change which has previously caused some concerns. However, changes are now starting to embed and there is a more consistent staff team providing continuity for children and young people. A parent said: 'Since the school changed hands it's been a very slow improvement, a muddled time, but I feel more confident than I ever have done with the leadership of the school and the care staff.'

The acting head of care is qualified and experienced. She is very well supported by the executive headteacher. They provide strong, supportive leadership. Staff feel very well supported and believe that changes to the school have led to improvements. Staff are either qualified or are completing their induction. New staff have ensured that there is a permanent staff team so the school no longer relies on agency workers. New staff say that the training provided prior to them starting their role gives them the knowledge and skills they require to work with the children and young people effectively. Staff have gone through a rigorous training programme which has ensured that they have a better understanding of their role and the children and young people they work with. For example, staff found the training about autism spectrum disorder very useful, particularly as it was presented by an external speaker who has personal experience.

Collaborative working with external agencies and parents helps to keep children and young people safe and enables them to make good progress academically, emotionally and socially.

There are some good monitoring systems which help managers to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the service. External monitoring by the independent visitor is comprehensive. Recommendations are constructive and acted upon. Additionally, there is robust external scrutiny from directors who regularly visit the school and support the executive headteacher.

The school has completed a good action plan to address the failed national minimum standards from the previous inspection. They have complied with all national minimum standards at this inspection.

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

Social care unique reference number SC012962

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	7
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	8 to18
Executive Headteacher	Lise Sugden
Date of previous boarding inspection	07/03/2016
Telephone number	01908 542912
Email address	lise.sugden@cambianguroup.com

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