

Notton House School

28 Notton, Lacock, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 2NF

Inspection dates	12/12/2016 to 14/12/2016	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Requires improvement	3
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

- There is insufficient evidence of good progress with the operation of the residential provision since the last inspection. At this time of this inspection, not all of the national minimum standards had been met.
- The senior leadership team demonstrates the capacity to improve the quality of the residential provision to a good standard. The principal has made improvements to the school over the past two years. This includes deploying more care staff, significantly improving the school's finances and starting renovations to the residential accommodation. A new principal has been appointed to start from January 2017. Governors are actively involved in the review of the quality of care. Several governors are new to the role, have identified a need to improve the service and are fully involved in making the required changes.
- There is a strong induction process for young people entering into the provision for the first time, and they have good access to a wide range of specialist health support services. Young people's educational attendance improves and, as a consequence, their opportunities increase. They have access to a good range of social and recreational activities. The school provides a good family support service. Staff are enthusiastic and use their own initiative to engage young people.
- Areas for improvement identified at this inspection relate to ensuring that the residential accommodation is maintained to a good standard throughout and that risk assessments for environmental restrictions are completed, and the need for a further review of the use of safe rooms and, improvement to the records of complaints and the records relating to the use of safe rooms, and the arrangements for covering staff's absence. Independent return home interviews do not routinely take place and

there are some shortfalls in the training and supervision of a small number of staff. The report from independent monitoring of the residential provision does not routinely demonstrate that discussions have taken place with young people and staff.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

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

- 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.
- 6.3 The school ensures that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.
- 12.6 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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. When 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.
- 15.9 When only one member of staff is on duty at any time, a risk assessment has been carried out and recorded in writing, identifying any likely risks to children, staff and members of the public.
- 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).
- 19.1 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.

- 19.6 All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance.
- 20.2 Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include: checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of reasonable force, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children; evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded; assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private, if they wish).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that young people live in a nurturing environment by reducing and seek to remove the use of institutionalised practice and features.

Information about this inspection

The headteacher was given three hours' notice of this inspection. The inspectors spent three days at the school, and reviewed the school's policies, procedures, records and associated documents. All the residential accommodation was inspected. Some evening meals were taken with young people. The inspectors spoke with young people and observed the interactions between themselves and with staff. Meetings took place with staff regarding their roles and areas of responsibility. Inspectors had telephone conversations with some young people's family members. Inspectors met the safeguarding governor and the school improvement officer, and had a telephone conversation with the chair of governors.

Inspection team

Guy Mammatt	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 nine 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 on the school site. The residential provision was last inspected in March 2016.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Requires improvement

There are shortfalls identified in meeting the national minimum standards for residential special schools. This means that the school does not yet meet the criteria for a judgement of good. The shortfalls identified have the potential to impact negatively on the welfare of young people. However, currently there are no identified safeguarding concerns that place young people at serious risk of harm. It is imperative that the senior leadership team rectifies the shortfalls and demonstrates sustained improvement in response to this inspection.

The quality of care and support provided to young people is good. Their attendance at the residential provision during the week supports their achievement and attendance at school. Many young people have experienced a number of previous educational placement breakdowns. Young people's behaviour is frequently erratic when they return to school on a Monday and when they prepare to go home on a Friday. Staff work well to re-establish and maintain the necessary boundaries each week, which young people generally respond to well.

Care and education staff work well together to support young people's progress and devise bespoke education packages. Consequently, some young people benefit from good links to employment, apprenticeship schemes and further education courses.

Good support is given to help young people to develop social skills and confidence. Some stay at the school until they are 18 years of age and are given very good care and support to help them to develop skills for adulthood. Young people in the 'independence houses' have detailed support plans to help their development. They cook for themselves and others, and have developed good social relationships.

Staff at the residential provision work in partnership with others, including parents and carers, placing authorities and external agencies, to support the young people. Young people and staff have good relationships.

The quality of care and support

Good

Young people new to residential life receive good support. There is a thorough and careful induction programme. There are effective links between education and care staff as part of the assessment to establish whether the school can meet a young person's needs. As a result, young people settle into the residential provision quickly and many of them do well at school. A parent of one reported that he has learned to read and write within 12 months of attending the school.

The school's healthcare arrangements promote young people's physical, emotional and psychological well-being effectively. Young people are engaged in physical activity almost daily, which benefits them. There is good access to a range of therapeutic services organised by the school. The arrangements for managing medication are safe and promote young people's independence, when possible.

Young people are kept busy, and enjoy a range of social and recreational activities. One of the highlights of the year is a residential holiday with staff to an activity leisure camp, with plenty of swimming-pool slides and outdoor adventures. Young people choose their evening activities through house meetings and a student council group.

Young people have a choice of nourishing meals. The food is plentiful and kitchen staff cater well for young people with special dietary requirements. The whole school enjoys special events together, for example a Christmas lunch that includes all the care, education, administration and auxiliary staff, as well as the young people.

Staff recognise and respect young people's diversity. All young people are included in conversations, regardless of their communication needs or backgrounds. As a result, young people learn tolerance and respect for others.

Young people's care plans are up to date and of good quality. They include their latest statement of educational needs or education health and care plan, and meet their needs. Young people have good opportunities to stay in contact with their families and carers. Family members visit the school to help to put Christmas decorations up or join in a 'Bake Off' competition. Some parents and carers will visit and take their child out for dinner. A new initiative since the last inspection offers family support to those most in need. This provides an inclusive support network for parents and carers, as well as more targeted work with some individuals. As a result of this initiative, young people's relationship with their family has improved, and consequently their educational progress.

The residential accommodation is not of good quality throughout or always sufficiently maintained. The majority of young people's living space is old fashioned, confined and dark. It has been like this for some time. The principal and head of care recognise that it would benefit from modernisation. Therefore, renovation has started to improve young people's living spaces and develop their bedrooms to include en suite bathrooms.

Some features of the provision, such as the fencing, the ongoing use of safe rooms and staff practice, do not promote a nurturing environment throughout. The school is asked to review these, along with the practice of staff carrying large numbers of keys and using radios to communicate with each other.

How well children and young people are protected

Requires improvement

Young people's movement within the residential accommodation and dining facilities is restricted by a series of locked doors, only accessible with an electronic swipe card. The young people's degree of access depends on their age, parental consent and individual needs. Some young people have electronic swipe cards and others do not. The principal states that these restrictions are in place to keep young people safe. However, the use of these measures has not been informed by undertaking a written risk assessment to help to work towards individual young people gaining more independence.

The immediate response to young people who go missing is good. Staff follow young people and negotiate with them to come back quickly and safely. However, young

people are not routinely provided with independent return-to-home interviews following the occasions when they go missing. Therefore, staff are missing opportunities to understand why the young person went missing, to gather vital information to inform risk assessments and to try to reduce the likelihood of them going missing again.

There are shortfalls in the records relating to the use of physical restraint. One staff member who has assisted colleagues in performing restraints is not listed in the records. Staff do not always provide adequate detail about the length of time that a young person spends in a safe room, and some records of young people entering a safe room do not give sufficient detail of why they were in there. Notwithstanding these shortfalls, there has been an overall improvement in the detail of information recorded in restraint records generally since the last inspection. The management team is now focused on routinely reflecting on incidents, improving the quality of the recording and reducing the use of restrictive interventions. The head of care's analysis of behaviour management techniques shows that the use of ground-hold restraints on young people has been reduced from six in one term, 12 months ago, to none since the start of the 2016/17 academic year.

The head of care has reviewed the use of the safe rooms since the last inspection. There is now a safe room protocol that has been shared with the designated officer and the police. Usually, young people enter the rooms during their education day. Young people state that they can leave when they have calmed down and that they will sometimes stay there longer for a chat with staff, as they see it as a calm place away from the distractions of others. The use of safe rooms has decreased since the last inspection. However, this provision can be restrictive and requires further review to identify alternative ways to manage young people's behaviour.

Safeguarding training is provided to all staff across the school annually. In addition, two learning mentors provide them with extra training to learn how to identify and act on concerns. As a result, staff are clear about the procedures to follow when they are concerned about the safety or welfare of a young person. Allegations or suspicions of harm have been managed effectively. There is a designated safeguarding team that is effective in pursuing concerns and protecting young people. The principal has good links with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board for the area where the home is located and with the provider's home authority.

Staff use effective strategies to combat bullying between young people. The learning mentors work well with the victims and perpetrators of bullying to help them to understand their behaviours and ensure that they have a positive experience at the school.

The staff vetting and selection process is good. The school's recruitment procedures help to ensure that suitable people are employed. The necessary health and safety checks of the premises are carried out at appropriate intervals.

Young people are supported to learn about e-safety and the safe use of mobile phones. Their files contain the necessary consent forms for activities and medical treatment.

The arrangements for covering staffing shortfalls require improvement. The numbers of staff on the care team have increased over the past two years. However, on occasions, they fall short of the level of staffing required to support groups of young people who exhibit challenging behaviour effectively. The school has not undertaken a written assessment of the risks for staff working by themselves.

Some staff are not sufficiently trained and do not receive professional supervision. One staff member was identified as supporting staff during restraint incidents without having undertaken the necessary training. A team leader who supervises other staff has not been trained to undertake supervision. In addition, a group of four staff do not regularly receive professional supervision. This does not ensure that all young people are looked after by a fully qualified and supported staff team.

The written record of complaints does not contain information about a complaint received by the principal relating to the residential provision or the action taken by him in response. Young people are able to discuss their likes and dislikes during house meetings. Staff take action to resolve any issues raised by young people.

The safeguarding governor carries out regular independent monitoring visits of the residential provision. Records of these visits do not demonstrate that there are opportunities for young people or care staff to meet with him and discuss their views.

The residential provision is an integral part of the school. There is good collaborative working between education and care staff. Individuals work across both environments and come to know young people well.

The senior leadership team is open to innovative suggestions and initiatives. A number of staff are very motivated and enthusiastic about their role and how they can help young people. For example, one member of staff has started a reading club with young people and another has instigated a family support service in response to an identified need.

Managers identify that young people benefit from being supported by a consistent staff team that they are familiar with. Therefore, they provide good additional support to help staff with their attendance. They have opportunities to meet with an education psychologist and an occupational therapist, when required, to help them back to work.

Managers monitor the quality of care provided and use learning from practice to try to improve the experiences and care for young people. There are clear policies and procedures to address conflict between young people. Managers evidence good partnership working with external agencies to promote the welfare of young people.

Leaders and managers demonstrate a determination to improve. They have an understanding of the weaknesses of the residential provision and a development plan to address the key issues. Governors are actively involved in the review of the quality of the care. Their continued scrutiny will be essential to helping the leadership team.

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	109394
Social care unique reference number	SC039112
DfE registration number	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.

Type of school	Residential special school
Number of boarders on roll	33
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	9 to 19
Headteacher	Peter Evans
Date of previous boarding inspection	11/03/2016
Telephone number	01249 730407
Email address	admin@nottonhouse.bristol.sch.uk

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