

Springfield House Community Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103623
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323868
Inspection date	19 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Frank Price

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Boarding provision	
Social care URN	
Social care inspector	Carole Moore

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jan Whitty
Headteacher	Janet Collins
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2006
School address	Kenilworth Road Knowle Solihull B93 0AJ
Telephone number	01564 775696
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Age group	5–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors and one Childcare Inspector.

Description of the school

Springfield House Special School is a residential special school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. In addition, most pupils have either some form of autistic spectrum disorder or attention difficulties. Residential pupils can stay up to four nights a week and, at the time of the inspection, six pupils were boarding. Most pupils join the school at some point during Years 2 to 6. Of the 64 pupils on roll, 10 pupils were girls and nine pupils were in public care. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and just one pupil was learning English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The overall effectiveness of Springfield House Special School is outstanding. The school has had a turnover of key leadership posts in the last three years but the relatively new headteacher, along with the senior leadership team, provides confident, energetic and determined leadership so that the pursuit of school improvement is relentless. Excellent teamwork at all levels and a positive and supportive atmosphere, which promotes learning, are hallmarks of the school. The high quality residential provision makes a strong impact in preparing pupils well for school, so that they are receptive to learning. Exemplary features of the school include the promotion of pupils' emotional health and well-being through supportive staff relationships and the excellent involvement of external agencies, such as a local charitable organisation, which works with both pupils and their families. Parents, understandably, are fulsome in their praise of the school and commented upon the good levels of home-school support, effective communication and the remarkable improvements they see in their child's behaviour and overall progress.

Standards on entry for most pupils are well below average, as pupils have suffered interruption to their schooling due to disruptions to their education through fragmented attendance and exclusions from their previous schools. However, the progress that pupils make is outstanding. This is because their emotional and social needs are addressed swiftly and effectively, so that learning can take place and, as a result, pupils start to thrive. Generally, the longer a pupil stays in the school, the greater the progress they make. Key to this excellent progress is the outstanding teaching pupils receive. Lessons are lively, which engages pupils in learning exceptionally well. A wide variety of teaching and learning styles are used and pupils are enthusiastic learners. However, learning targets for literacy and numeracy are not known widely enough by pupils and are not written in language they understand, and so they do not know how to improve their work further. The outstanding curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' very effective learning. Specialist strategies are used exceptionally well to meet the needs of those pupils who have attention difficulties and those on the autistic continuum.

The outstanding care, support and guidance of pupils help them to make vast improvements in their attitudes to learning and to each other. Good staff role models and high levels of supervision contribute to pupils feeling safe and secure and developing respect for one another and their environment. The behaviour of pupils is remarkable, giving the school a calm and purposeful ethos. As a result, the personal development and well-being of pupils is outstanding. They enjoy lessons. One pupil stated, 'I like the activities at school, there is always something fun to do.' The dramatically improved attendance of pupils is testament to their enjoyment of school. Pupils develop an excellent understanding of healthier lifestyles through the plentiful opportunities for them to participate in sports and outdoor activities.

The headteacher sets high expectations of both staff and pupils. Excellent links with a range of outside agencies have been established to the benefit of children and their families. Monitoring of the school's work is thorough and evaluative. This has ensured that the school is constantly striving to improve every aspect of its work.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 2

The quality of the boarding provision is good with some outstanding features where dedicated staff ensure pupils feel safe and have fun whilst learning. The school meets all the Key National

Minimum Standards with one recommendation made under staying safe. The small number of recommendations for improvement made at the last inspection have all been addressed.

Pupils' health needs are managed very well by the on-site, part-time school nurse and there are good systems in place to ensure there is effective communication between the residential staff and the school nurse. There are clear policies and secure storage of medication. Parental wishes and consent are sought for staff to administer medication and first aid. The health and well-being of pupils is promoted by staff through physical exercise and a balanced diet.

Healthy menus are generally appreciated by pupils. They are consistently provided with a well-balanced diet and choices mean that they are receiving the range of nutrients required for healthy growth and nutrition. Pupils learn about the principles of healthy eating as they enjoy an interesting and varied range of meals. Specific dietary needs are catered for including those related to culture, religion, food intolerance and pupils with allergies. The children treat mealtimes as enjoyable social occasions and accept good standards of behaviour as the norm.

Pupils feel safe and are clear on boundaries within the school and their personal behaviour. There are low levels of bullying and pupils feel confident that staff will 'sort it out' when reported. Pupils are supported in addressing any behavioural difficulties they may have and receive clear and consistent responses from staff. Behaviour incentive schemes are well received by pupils and considered fair. Staff are trained to manage and respond to challenging behaviour and comprehensive records are maintained.

Good safeguarding procedures exist throughout the school. All staff are briefed on how to report any concerns and staff, with the exception of the catering team, have all received appropriate child protection training. The open culture encourages pupils to express their views and raise any issues. Pupil complaint processes are readily available for pupils who feel unhappy. Health and safety issues are taken very seriously with robust policies and procedures in place. Designated staff are responsible for ensuring the safety of the site and all staff receive relevant training. Safety matters are reinforced with pupils through lessons, activities, fire drills, use of school transport and the school code of conduct.

A strength of the school is the enjoyment and achievement of the pupils. The range of activities is enjoyed and appreciated by the pupils, who recognise they are given opportunities to try new things. Staff make good use of the local community and plan various evening trips out of school. Staff have undertaken specific training to become qualified instructors to support activities such as golf and the Forest School, with further opportunities to visit the environmental studies centre which is on the school site. The residential provision supports the educational progress of students by working closely with teaching staff, promoting homework, and encouraging and assisting with access to computers and the library.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. There is a consistent commitment to improving equality and diversity in practice. The quality and detail of pupils' residence plans also support this commitment. Each pupil is encouraged to reach their potential and enjoy the same rights and opportunities as other young people, with support from staff. All staff have a good knowledge of the pupils they are working with, ensuring their needs are consistently met.

There are good systems in place to support pupils' personal development and relationships with staff are very positive. Pupils say they like staying in residence and enjoy all the activities that are available to them. Pupil consultation is an integral part of the development of the school. This occurs formally through the student council, surveys and weekly residential group meetings. The use of residential support workers during the school day to support pupils means

that links between school and residential staff are good. For example, the handover of pupils to teachers at the start and finish of each day ensures staff are aware of any concerns that may have arisen.

A thorough assessment process prior to placement contributes to ensuring that the individual needs of pupils are well met within the boarding environment. New pupils are provided with leaflets about boarding as well as a leaflet about what to do if they are unhappy. There is sensitive handling when either introducing the pupil into the residential unit or moving them on to their next school setting.

Boarding accommodation is of a good standard with all pupils having their own bedroom. There has been extensive refurbishment and the unit is child friendly and homely. Pupils are encouraged to personalise their rooms and pupils are proud of their environment.

The commitment and enthusiasm of the staff are strengths of the school. Staff benefit from a good training programme, which is evident in their work. The senior management team has a clear vision for the development of the residential provision and has identified areas to address to further enhance their provision. They effectively monitor the welfare of pupils.

Representatives of the governing body regularly visit the residential units, recording the areas that they have looked at and producing well-written reports. This provides additional safeguarding mechanisms for the pupils by looking at staff and management practices.

- What must be done to secure future improvement
- Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure there is training for all staff, including ancillary staff, agency staff and volunteers, in the prevention and recognition of abuse, dealing with disclosures or suspicions of abuse, and the school's child protection procedures. NMS 5.8.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure pupils know their learning targets and that they are written in a way so that pupils can understand them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Outstanding improvements in pupils' personal, social and emotional development lay the foundations for their excellent academic progress. Some pupils achieve the nationally expected level in national tests at the end of Year 6. This represents outstanding progress, given their previous school experiences and often fragmented attendance. Assessment information shows that nearly all pupils make impressive gains in their numeracy and literacy skills, often over a short period. Pupils do particularly well in mathematics and science. Various groups of pupils, such as those with different types of learning disabilities, those in care and those from minority ethnic groups, perform equally well. Pupils who are in residency or participate in extended school activities make good progress, although often from lower starting points. The school sets challenging whole-school targets, and most pupils achieve these well. Pupils' progress in writing is an area that school leaders have highlighted for improvement. Following an increased focus on writing, pupils are now making good progress in writing more creatively and writing

for a wider range of purposes. Pupils' outstanding academic progress prepares them well for their next phase of education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils gain an extensive knowledge and understanding of spiritual and cultural activities, especially related to music, poetry and art. They have a very good knowledge of different religions and people from different backgrounds, and show a high level of respect and appreciation of adults in the school. Their moral and social development is remarkable, demonstrated by exceptionally good behaviour in school and their very positive attitudes to learning. There have been exceptional improvements in attendance by pupils who were previously non-attenders or who had been at several previous schools. There has also been a marked reduction in fixed-term exclusions. Pupils feel safe from bullying and confident that they can talk to staff about concerns. Safe practices are adopted within well-established routines, and pupils have an excellent understanding about staying safe and having a healthy lifestyle. For example, pupils quickly understand the impact of their behaviour on others and eagerly participate in a wide range of sporting and leisure activities.

Interaction between pupils is very good and there are excellent relationships with staff. There is a good sense of community, although the isolated location of the school limits opportunities to extend pupils' contribution to wider community cohesion, but the contribution to the school community through the school council is very good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Relationships between staff and pupils are positive and supportive. Pupils' successes are readily celebrated and this does much to instil confidence in them. As a result, pupils thrive. Pupils' behaviour is managed consistently and sensitively, and consequently, they make exceptional gains in improving their behaviour. Lessons are carefully planned to ensure that all individual needs are fully met. Teachers work hard to ensure that learning is lively and information and communication technology (ICT), particularly interactive whiteboards, are used creatively to make teaching and learning stimulating. Teachers understand that lessons need to have good pace to them so that those pupils who have short attention spans do not lose focus. Symbols are used effectively for those pupils who need visual prompts to help them learn. Teachers and support staff are skilled in ensuring that there are good levels of interaction in lessons so that pupils actively participate in learning. For example, in a Spanish lesson, pupils took delight in answering questions, greeting each other through singing songs, and counting up to twelve in front of one another.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

There is a strong focus on enabling high levels of achievement, particularly in basic skills, through high expectations. However, the curriculum is also very effective in promoting wider skills and developing pupils' social and emotional development. The school has introduced a themed approach to learning to provide greater enjoyment. Specialist strategies to address specific learning needs of pupils are incorporated well into the curriculum. The residential

provision strongly supports and extends curriculum activities and promotes the pupils' personal development and achievement exceptionally well. The curriculum is exceptionally well enhanced by a wide range of opportunities for every pupil to participate in outdoor activities, sports, arts and regular access to ICT. Additionally, the pupils benefit substantially from a good range of therapies and counselling, including specialist support from outside agencies. Pupils' enjoyment is increased through the Forest Schools programme, where pupils enjoy learning outdoors.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding because staff know pupils exceptionally well and the difficulties they face which can affect both their learning and behaviour. Links with other agencies are extremely strong so that effective action can be taken to overcome the obstacles that affect pupils. There are widely understood procedures for promoting positive behaviour and sanctions for unacceptable behaviour, which are implemented well. The residential provision is very effective in promoting consistent approaches for managing pupils. Procedures for promoting pupils' safety and welfare are very robust. However, not all pupils know their learning targets in numeracy and literacy, so they are not always as clear as they could be about what they need to do to improve further. Some classes display pupils' targets but they are not in a language that pupils can easily understand.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Governors, staff and parents hold the headteacher in high regard. There is a clear and widely understood direction for the school. The governing body holds the headteacher to account extremely effectively and provides both challenge and support in equal measure. As a result, the school has an excellent capacity to improve. The school development plan is thorough and is a valuable tool for securing school improvement. It is shared with relevant staff and the correct priorities ensure there is a clear focus on raising standards for pupils. The performance management of staff is rigorous and areas identified from this process are closely aligned to the development plan to secure further improvement. Partnership working with a range of agencies is excellent. For example, the school works with a charitable trust so that the emotional and social needs of pupils can be addressed more effectively and this support is extended to families, who appreciate this lifeline.

The school uses challenging whole-school targets, including aspirational targets for pupils to achieve. In this way, the school provides rigour and high expectations of its pupils. Assessment data have been carefully analysed to check that there is no underperformance by any groups of pupils.

The headteacher has a very clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school, although the school has been unduly modest in judging its own effectiveness. The school is on an isolated campus and the headteacher has worked hard to minimise this isolation of pupils by increasing links with the other schools and the local and wider communities.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

20 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Springfield House Special School, Solihull, B93 0AJ

I enjoyed my visit to your school, and meeting and talking with you. All the staff, including teaching, support and residential staff, look after you exceptionally well. You make outstanding progress in improving both your behaviour and academic skills. I was impressed by how well you behave, even though, for some of you, this is a challenge. Your attendance at school is excellent and many of you commented how much you like the school. Many of you also said that you liked the staff and you feel able to confide in them and that they are always ready to help you. The school works closely with your families or other people, which in turn helps you to be better prepared to face school.

The residential provision is good. It helps you to become more independent and prepares you well for school at the start of the day. The range of activities that all pupils can participate in is excellent. You are taught outstandingly well and teachers ensure that lessons are interesting. You are taught the right things. The school has worked very hard in providing you with an exciting range of experiences and activities, and this has helped to make your schooling enjoyable.

The headteacher, along with the other staff and the governors, have done an outstanding job in making your school so good. You can play a part in helping the school to be even better by continuing to try hard.

To improve the school further, I have asked the teachers to ensure that you all know your learning targets in numeracy and literacy and that they are written in a way that you can understand them. You can help too, by referring to your targets and doing your very best to achieve them.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Frank Price

Lead inspector