

Eaton Hall School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121263
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	327440
Inspection dates	24–25 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Eaton

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

Boarding provision	
Social care URN	
Social care inspector	Dorrit Andrews

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	9–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School (total)	33
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Roy Kerrison
Headteacher	Miss Valerie Moore
Date of previous school inspection	28 September 2005
School address	Pettus Road Norwich Norfolk NR4 7BU
Telephone number	01603 457480
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector and a Social Care Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small residential special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). Students come from throughout Norfolk. Almost all students are White British and all have a statement of special education needs. At the time of the inspection, four were looked after children. Students' home circumstances vary but many are from disadvantaged backgrounds. The education of a significant number of students has been disrupted very much prior to them joining Eaton Hall. Owing to this and the nature of their learning difficulties, students typically work at levels well below national expectations. The school provides boarding accommodation on the main site and in a pair of semi-detached houses nearby. Currently 21 students board for some or all of the week during term time, although all students attend on a residential basis when they first join the school. In June 2007, the school gained specialist status in the area of BESD. Its awards include the Artsmark Gold, Activemark, Sportsmark, Healthy School's award, Investors in People, and Team Teach Gold.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Working as a close knit team, teaching and care staff are hugely successful in equipping students both personally and academically for their lives beyond school. Students respond extremely well to the school's clear and consistent efforts to manage and improve their behaviour. As a result, they achieve outstandingly well, making up a significant amount of the ground they had previously lost in their learning. By the time they leave at the end of Year 11, all students have earned accreditation in English, mathematics and science. All receive at least one GCSE certificate, with higher attaining students gaining as many as eight passes.

Students confirm that the school 'helps you a lot to improve your behaviour'. They consider that this is because they can always rely on staff to talk to them and help them. Relationships between staff and students are excellent and contribute significantly to students' outstanding personal development. During an assembly to give the whole school a taste of martial arts, for instance, boys and adults practised together, demonstrating a staggering degree of mutual respect and trust. Events such as this contribute greatly to students' enjoyment of school, but they also like lessons. Teachers plan tasks that capture students' interest, judging exactly the right time to move into a different activity, so the boys remain focused and working hard. Support is consistently available, for example, to explain difficult ideas or quietly remind students how they should behave. This exceptional teaching results in students' smooth and rapid academic progress as they move up through the school.

Students have an excellent awareness of healthy lifestyles. They take part enthusiastically in the wide range of sporting activities offered during the day and after school as part of the extremely good curriculum, which meets their needs exceptionally well. Students' knowledge and understanding of their local community and of other cultures are promoted at every turn through very practical and relevant means. For example, students help elderly neighbours with gardening and some have interviewed an asylum seeker in order to gain a greater appreciation of the hardships faced by some communities. Work experience, as part of a work-related learning programme, and college courses also have a profound impact on students' social development and on preparing them for adult life. Once again, the improvements in their behaviour enable students to benefit from opportunities such as these.

The school provides an outstanding quality of care, guidance and support. Students say with confidence that 'staff look after you' but they play their own part in keeping each other safe. Following a suggestion by the school council, trained 'buddies' offer an alternative response to other students' concerns, fully aware that they may need to involve staff in some circumstances.

The school's exceptional performance is the outcome of first-rate leadership and management. At its heart are the determination and skills of the headteacher. She ensures that all those with leadership roles in and across both day and boarding provision share her sky-high aspirations for the school, staff and every student. Rigorous and accurate self-evaluation provides a secure basis for an outstanding capacity to continue to improve. Through its specialist school status, Eaton Hall is building further on its very many partnerships with other schools, extending opportunities for its own students and offering support to others with similar difficulties. The school provides excellent value for money. It leaves no stone unturned in its commitment to

ensuring that every student achieves as well as possible and develops into a responsible young citizen.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 2

The quality of boarding is good, with all but one outcome area being outstanding. The school meets nearly all key National Minimum Standards and exceeds a significant number of them. The outcome for economic wellbeing is judged as satisfactory because boarders' sleeping accommodation does not meet the required space and privacy standards. All recommendations from the previous inspection report have been acted upon.

Students receive a high level of care and outstanding pastoral support. Health needs are met and access to health care professionals is arranged as necessary. Working relationships with the local health centre where students are registered are very good and qualified first aid staff are always available on duty. Staff follow clear procedures for the management and administration of medication, both on and off site. Appropriate records are maintained and medication is securely stored. Emphasis is placed on the provision of a balanced, healthy diet and exercise. Students contribute ideas to menus and are actively involved in the purchasing of healthy snacks for the tuck shop. A large proportion of students spoke enthusiastically about favourite meals and the range of food provided.

Clearly written policies and procedures are in place to promote and safeguard the welfare of students. Staff are very aware of their responsibilities towards students in their care. All staff receive child protection training and regular updates. Bullying is not a problem at the school. Students' risk assessments identify potential conflicts and staff are vigilant about such issues. Students have a clear understanding of what they should do if someone is making them unhappy. They identify a wide range of adults within the school who they would go to for help and 'buddies' offer an additional source of support. The use of behaviour plans, reflective discussions and supportive strategies all help students to behave appropriately. The management of challenging behaviour is a strength and the school has achieved gold standard in how to deal with students who present with severe difficulties. Staff receive regular training and maintain detailed records of sanctions and the use of physical intervention. Students consider discipline across the school community to be fair.

The school takes safety matters seriously and robust procedures are in place for the maintenance of a safe environment for students, staff and visitors. Effective procedures are in place for the recruitment and checking of staff.

Joint working between care and teaching staff to support children's educational progress is outstanding. Students receive exceptionally good pastoral care and support on a daily basis through a wide range of initiatives. Very good communication systems across the school contribute effectively to students' welfare. Students are actively encouraged and supported to express their views and to be involved in making decisions. Excellent meetings include the school council, healthy food group, liaison and tutor meetings and the students' wellbeing group. Recent changes highlighted by students include enhanced menus and activities and the ability to use reward tokens in the tuck shop. Students are strongly encouraged to maintain contact with their families. The importance of good communication between parents and students is emphasised to parents during the school's admission process. There are pay telephones available for students to make and receive calls and parents may visit the school at weekends and evenings. Parents and carers receive weekly telephone calls from child care staff

regarding their child's progress and are kept informed of medical matters and any concerns. Half-termly school based meetings, or home visits, are used to support work with individual students. Parents and carers are also given every encouragement to attend health screening visits involving their child.

Boarding accommodation is suitably decorated, furnished and clean. Staff have worked hard to provide a welcoming environment for students and they encourage the personalisation of sleeping areas. However, sleeping areas at the main site are only satisfactory because they have very limited floor space and offer limited privacy. Plans have recently been agreed to upgrade these areas.

The leadership and management of boarding are exceptionally strong and contribute significantly to the overall outcomes for students. Staffing levels outside teaching time are sufficient for the number of boarders, the activities they are involved in and the different age groups. Boarding students report that they know who is on duty and who is responsible for them. They can always find a member of staff when they need to, including at night. Students are looked after by experienced, well-trained and competent staff who understand their needs and work closely with them to help them to progress and achieve. The low turnover of staff provides students with consistency and stability and promotes extremely positive relationships. Effective systems are in place to monitor students' welfare, both internally and by the local authority. However, not all monitored records are signed to confirm that checking has taken place.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that it meets the National Minimum Standard 32.2 by ensuring that all boarding records monitored on a half termly and termly basis are signed to evidence that monitoring has taken place.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Disruptions to their education, often including exclusion from a number of different schools, mean that most students join Eaton Hall with huge gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Improvements in their behaviour once they arrive ensure that, during both primary and secondary years, students' progress and achievement are outstanding. All groups of students, including those who are looked after children, who have gifts or talents or who find learning particularly difficult achieve equally impressively. This is because the school makes certain that it meets the needs of each individual. Students typically find writing especially difficult, but they make great strides in this aspect of English because they are provided with a wealth of relevant reasons to write. Students frequently use their very well developed skills in information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance their writing.

In 2008, half of the Year 11 students gained five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to G in a wide range of subjects including English, double science, mathematics, design and technology, ICT, art and design, and religious education. The school exceeded its targets for GCSE results. Students are also successful in Entry Level courses and most gain the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) award at bronze level. Those who complete the two-year college courses receive NVQ level 1 accreditation. Students regularly overcome very significant difficulties in order to achieve these outcomes. For example, boys with severe difficulty learning mathematics have gone on to pass examinations in this subject and in engineering. The school has set very challenging specialist school targets. Last year, many of

these targets were met but unavoidable staffing difficulties, now resolved, meant that a few were missed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' behaviour is frequently exemplary. This means that many earn privileges such as going out of school unaccompanied during free time. Lessons are seldom disrupted significantly, although students' behavioural difficulties occasionally cause outbursts and challenges to authority. Students are confident that bullying is not tolerated and know exactly how they should respond if it were to occur. They make excellent progress in learning to manage their own behaviour. They are trained to take responsibility for their own safety, for example as pedestrians or when using public transport. Although they often dislike to admit that they enjoy school, students' extremely positive attitudes are reflected in above average attendance rates and their eagerness to stay in the evening for activities or extra lessons.

Students make an excellent contribution to the school community. They help to run the tuck shop and contribute ideas and practical support to the school's groups that promote wellbeing and the eating of healthy food. Those in Years 5 and 6 work together to grow award-winning fruit and vegetables. Students readily volunteer to take part in community projects such as repairing fences or planting bulbs to improve the environment. They show that they think hard about moral and spiritual issues. Following a visit to a children's hospice, for instance, one student remarked, 'It made me think about my life and I realise that life is precious.' Their vastly improved behaviour and attitudes, achievement in crucial areas such as mathematics, literacy and ICT, and their knowledge of the world of work prepare students exceptionally well for the next stage in their lives. The difference between this judgement and that in the boarding section of the report is because different criteria are used for this outcome in the two inspections.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers avoid confrontations and consistently reinforce the school's expectations by, for example, reminding students not to call out answers. They reward good behaviour, efforts and achievements and apply sanctions fairly so students appreciate the consequences of their actions. Teaching assistants make significant contributions to teaching and learning. Teachers are very knowledgeable about their subjects and teaching assistants also specialise in particular aspects of the curriculum. This means that all staff in lessons provide excellent advice and support to promote learning. Students are always informed about what they are to learn. Teachers check their understanding and progress before moving on to new work. They are skilled at asking questions that encourage students to express their ideas and organise their thoughts. In turn, students confidently seek clarification and additional information. Excellent relationships between staff and boys mean that teachers can challenge students to tackle demanding work. In a religious education lesson, for instance, Year 10 students considered the nature of the human soul, responding with great maturity. Assessments of students' learning are used particularly well to match work to their individual needs so all have equal opportunities to make outstanding progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is planned very carefully in order to meet students' individual needs at each stage of their education. Highly effective alternative arrangements are put in place should any student be unable to cope with full time education in school. As a result, and against considerable odds, two such students gained accreditation last year. Small numbers of students are successfully reintegrated into mainstream education through the school's extensive partnerships. From the primary years onwards, planned links between subjects enable students to transfer skills and reinforce their learning. Courses at three colleges provide students in Years 10 and 11 with excellent opportunities to make choices and gain experiences that will stand them in great stead in the future. Accredited courses meet the needs of all students. The boarding provision makes a marked contribution to enriching the curriculum through, for example, the huge range of very popular evening activities available to all students. Visits, including residential trips for all year groups, enhance students' experiences and enable them to practise social skills in different real life situations. They also promote students' knowledge and understanding of communities beyond the local area.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The comprehensive arrangements to safeguard students meet current government requirements. All senior staff are fully trained to lead on child protection issues and names are recorded on visitors' security badges so any concerns can be passed on immediately. Staff training is extensive in this and other relevant areas and the school offers its expertise in behaviour management to other schools. A key strength is the way in which care and teaching staff work closely together to ensure students' safety. Links with a wide range of agencies and professionals further enhance provision in this area. The wellbeing of particularly vulnerable students, including those looked after by their local authority, is monitored and supported very carefully. The school's strenuous efforts to encourage good attendance have met with significant success. Staff work very hard to encourage students to be independent. Older students practise skills such as budgeting, shopping and cooking during stays in the flat provided for this purpose. Students' academic and personal progress is tracked very thoroughly. A range of targets covers all aspects of their development and students are involved in evaluating their own achievements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Recently appointed staff speak very highly of the sensitive and effective support organised by leaders and offered by colleagues that enabled them to settle quickly into the school. This very strong sense of teamwork and the clear focus on developing staff's skills contribute to the school's outstanding capacity for continuous improvement. For instance, the range of accreditation offered to students increases each year. All groups of staff are involved in establishing the school's priorities, identifying these from activities such as observations by teachers of each other's lessons. The school makes an outstanding contribution to community cohesion, beginning with its commitment to providing equal opportunities for every student. The school's specialist status work is led extremely well by the deputy headteacher. It is already having an impact on what the school provides through improvements to the accommodation,

support for the community and more opportunities for enterprise activities. Governance is good. Governors were stimulated by the criticisms of their work at the time of the previous inspection. Their efforts have paid off and their role has developed very well since then. They find out about the school at first hand and contribute to monitoring its performance. A detailed plan of action is now helping to ensure that the reports of their visits are always evaluative.

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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	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	1
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	2
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

26 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Eaton Hall School, Norwich, NR4 7BU

Thank you for being so polite and helpful when we inspected your school. We thoroughly enjoyed our time with you and have some wonderful memories, such as the martial arts assembly. I now need to tell you that yours is an outstanding school.

You all make extremely good progress. The oldest students gain a great many certificates showing their excellent achievement. This is possible because of outstanding teaching and the huge improvements in your behaviour during your time at Eaton Hall. I know that you appreciate how much better you manage your own behaviour. You told me that this was because the staff help you and are always ready to talk to you. You are looked after extremely well by the care staff and teaching staff.

You make a huge contribution to the school and the local community, for example by being members of the school council, recycling or helping your neighbours. The older students learn a great deal about the world of work and follow college courses. All of you become increasingly independent, helping to prepare you for leaving school.

Most aspects of the boarding provision are outstanding. We have asked the school to make sure that improvements are made to the way some records are kept.

Your headteacher leads the school extremely well. She and the staff ensure that the school is always improving. We would like to send each of you and the staff our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Rosemary Eaton

Lead inspector