

Marland School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Pam Fletcher
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Marland School is a local authority residential special school for boys aged 11 to 16, who have experienced behavioural, emotional and/or social difficulties. Currently 38 young people are boarding at the school.

The school and boarding area are located in one main building. The school is set in extensive grounds in a rural location. Boarding arrangements are for some young people to have single rooms. Other students share either double or triple rooms. There are sitting areas, dining areas, and rooms used for recreational purposes. Outdoor play areas are available both in the school grounds and in a wooded area, owned by the school. The wooded area is located approximately two miles from the main school site.

Summary

This was an announced inspection, carried out by two inspectors. The purpose has been to undertake a key inspection looking at all National Minimum Standards (NMS). Additionally the focus has been to look at progress in relation to the recommendations made following the last inspection.

Overall, outcomes for young people boarding at the school are good. Staff are caring and professional. They demonstrate a good deal of patience, and boundaries are put in place effectively. Staff work well together and offer each other support. Senior managers operate an 'open door' approach. Young people can take themselves away from difficult situations and speak to senior staff as and when they need to.

The Principal and senior management team provide clear leadership. Staff feel valued and appreciate the support they receive from senior staff and team colleagues.

Young people admitted to the school have complex needs. Whilst the commitment and professionalism of staff is commendable, a lack of resources in meeting increasingly complex needs has resulted in shortfalls in staff training, standards of record keeping and formal supervision of staff.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection a recommendation was made that the school should review the use of the quiet room as a means of calming young people down. The school now maintains records of use. Young people do not report overuse of the room. Although this recommendation has been met, in view of the high numbers of incidents of challenging behaviours, review and monitoring should continue. This should include the length of time that a young person spends in the room.

A further recommendation was that the school should place a greater emphasis on the social and emotional progress of the young people in their review reports. The educational review records seen include a report on social progress as well as educational attainment.

It was recommended that the school continue to seek appropriate persons to fill the role of governor. There are still vacancies on the governing body, however current governors are proactive. Frequent visits are made to the school and records are monitored appropriately.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The health and wellbeing of young people living in the school is actively promoted. There are systems in place for the administration, recording and safe storage of medicines. The pastoral support manager takes a lead in this area and has worked hard to make procedures safe. The majority of prescribed medicines are now dispensed in 'blister' packs. Although the risk of error is reduced by this form of dispensing, current arrangements mean that staff who administer medicines to young people do not witness 'blister' packs being opened. Recording in the controlled drug book does not currently meet data protection requirements. Pharmacy advice and training has been accessed. First aid boxes are located strategically around the school. Staff receive first aid training and a list of those trained is displayed in the staff room. Accidents are recorded on specific sheets and held on file. The school has good links with general practitioners and nurses. The Principal reports having difficulty in accessing psychiatric services, despite the fact that a growing number of young people have very complex needs.

The school has achieved a healthy schools award. This is reflected in the healthy and well balanced meals served. Meals are well managed and orderly. Staff put boundaries in place effectively and good manners are encouraged. Kitchen staff have good relationships with young people and endeavour to take individual likes and dislikes into account. Fruit is available as an option for pudding.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

There are policies and procedures in place to promote the safety and wellbeing of young people living at the school. However, some aspects of the provision do not fully safeguard young people.

Staff demonstrate a good awareness of the need to protect confidentiality. Records are locked away securely. Staff are respectful in their approach towards young people. Young people report that the majority of staff knock before entering rooms. Young people are encouraged to contact their families and significant others. A pay telephone is available and in addition a number of young people have personal mobile telephones.

Young people feel able to talk to staff when they have concerns or issues. Managers and staff adopt an 'open door' approach. Key workers are appreciated, and young people spoken to referred to key workers as helpful and approachable. Young people can make a complaint using a newly devised tick box sheet. This is attractively illustrated and written in simple, understandable language. More formal complaints are retained on file. These records include any actions taken and outcomes.

Senior staff are aware of their responsibilities in protecting young people from abuse. There are policies in place that relate to child protection procedures. Training is provided at various levels. Not all staff fully understand the actions to be followed should a child protection concern arise.

A number of young people report that bullying occurs at times. The majority feel that staff take action to minimize bullying. Staff acknowledge the potential for bullying to arise and take a clear anti bullying stance. Staff closely monitor the whereabouts of young people and take additional steps to ensure that vulnerable young people in the school are protected.

Since the last inspection there have been a number of incidents that have resulted in police involvement. These have only recently been reported to Ofsted. The Principal is aware of this shortfall and has revised the system for reporting notifications.

The school has a policy in place should young people be absent without permission. Staff have developed close links with community police, who appreciate the actions of staff in keeping young people as safe as possible.

Young people at the school present with diverse and complex needs. Staff manage behaviours that can be extremely challenging. The school's Principal, senior managers, care and teaching staff are proactive in meeting individual needs in the most effective manner. An emphasis is put on reinforcing positive behaviours. Good behaviours are rewarded by points. Points gained result in monetary rewards. Alongside the points system staff continually praise good behaviour. Young people have a good understanding of what is expected of them and boundaries are clear. Staff act as very good role models.

Where behaviours become challenging de-escalation techniques are used. The 'open door' approach of staff enables young people to make the decision to remove themselves from difficult situations, to talk to staff and have the space to calm down. The school also uses a 'quiet room.' This is devoid of furniture, and at times young people are taken there when situations become unsafe. Since the last inspection the use of this room has been monitored, and the times it is used are recorded.

Staff use physical intervention where incidents result in a risk to the safety of young people and staff. The school has recorded such incidents electronically. At present these records do not have safeguards in place to 'close down' recordings. There are no safe arrangements in place for the storage of back up tapes. The school's hard bound record of physical intervention incidents, does not include all the components of NMS 10.9.

Designated staff in the school take responsibility for different aspects of health and safety. This arrangement has evolved and is becoming more formalised. Regular checks are made to fire safety apparatus. Risk assessments are in place for lone working, individual young people and activities. Measures have been taken to minimize risks in relation to the environment, for example keeping motor bikes locked away securely. There are no recorded risk assessments available that include the school environment as a whole.

Staff recruitment procedures follow the majority of elements listed under NMS 27.2. Contact had not been made with each previous employer involving work with children or vulnerable adults, and references have not been verified.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from the care and support that they receive at the school. They are encouraged to maximize their academic potential and to try out and enjoy new experiences.

Young people are supported by care staff in preparing for school each day. Care and education staff are present throughout the school day offering support, guidance and help during meal times and breaks. The school is arranged with living areas and school rooms in close proximity. Liaison between care and education staff is good with a real sense of working together. Senior managers oversee care and education. Relevant information is passed on effectively. A 24 hour log of events is held electronically. Staff coming on shift read this information. Whole school meetings are held once a week.

Young people benefit from a wide range of activities both on site and further a field. The activity programme includes football, motor bikes, go karts, swimming trips, games in the woods, boxing and a range of games consuls. Staff are very aware of young people's preferences and individual needs. Some young people prefer less active pursuits. Staff were observed playing board games with them in a patient and encouraging manner.

Staff demonstrate a good awareness of individual need and offer support in a thoughtful, sensitive manner. Young people appreciate the support they receive and often name key workers as people they can approach with concerns. The school has difficulty in accessing psychological support for those young people who have complex needs, including those who need additional emotional support.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people benefit from being at a school where their views are valued and taken into account. Those spoken to felt able to approach staff. The open door approach in operation means that young people can and do access staff at any time during the day. Young people understand the role of the school council. Members had been voted on to the council democratically. Changes made in response to the views of young people, include locks to bedroom doors, uniform changes and an increase in games consoles. The council has an annual budget of a £1,000 pounds. On an individual level, young people are encouraged to personalize their rooms and to say what they prefer to eat and what activities they want to enjoy.

The relationships between care staff and young people are very good. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of young people's needs. Relationships are mutually respectful and boundaries are put in place fairly. Staff are aware of the needs of the most vulnerable young people and demonstrate sensitivity and understanding.

All admissions to the school are planned. Pre admission visits are made to the school and a process and protocol followed. Young people are given an admission handbook on arrival. This is attractively illustrated and informative. It has a supplementary sheet which supports young people in reporting anything they might be unhappy about. Background information is gathered at the point of referral.

Older students who will be leaving the school are assisted in the process of transition by vocational work experience and by use of the school's independence flat. The flat has been updated to include all necessary facilities for independent living. Young people take turns in living in the independence flat for a week at a time.

The school holds records relating to young people's care and education needs. Some records are held electronically, others are held in filing cabinet slings. Key work records are held on

file, however these vary in substance and content. There are no placement plans available that include all the elements of NMS 17.5.

Young people are supported in maintaining contact with their families and significant others. Telephones are available for both outgoing and incoming calls. Where there are serious incidents, letters are sent informing families and social workers.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The school continues to take steps to maintain and improve boarding facilities, thereby promoting the economic well being of young people.

A simple smart uniform is provided by the school. Young people also have their own personal clothes. All young people observed were appropriately and fashionably dressed. There are good laundry arrangements in place.

Boarding areas are in close proximity under one roof. Areas are largely arranged according to the age and needs of young people. Those moving towards the end of their time at the school have the opportunity to use an independence flat. This has been suitably furnished in order to promote skills in cooking, cleaning and laundry. Young people use the flat on a rotational basis.

The school is situated in a rural community. There is outdoor space for activities such as football. Additional wooded play space is located approximately two miles away (not seen at this inspection).

The school has undergone a programme of update and refurbishment. Large bedrooms have been converted to offer more single occupancy rooms to young people. Those seen were small but nicely personalised. The Principal reported that some shower areas will be updated in the future. Young people report that current facilities are sufficient to meet their needs. The school is clean and maintenance staff work hard to repair areas of damage and disrepair.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Young people benefit from living at a school which supports them in developing both social skills and educational attainment.

The school has a clear Statement of Purpose, school prospectus and young person's handbook.

The Principal, governors, senior managers and staff at the school work closely in order to fully meet the needs of both individual young people and the needs of the group as a whole. Current young people are diverse in need and complexity. Senior staffs' time is taken up in dealing with day-to-day situations. Lack of time and resources means that the good practice witnessed is not underpinned by formal supervision and clear care planning documentation. It is commendable that staff remain highly motivated and committed to providing the best possible standards of care to young people. The Principal reports that an application has been made for 'Formula Funding.' He reports feeling confident that additional money would strengthen systems and allow staff to continue to look after young people safely.

The school maintains records for staff and young people. These include personnel files, accident records, young people's records, menus, and registers. Current systems involve electronic record keeping and paper records. Arrangements for the maintenance and storage of young people's individual files do not demonstrate clear security arrangements or provide a clear audit trail of events.

Staffing arrangements provide continuity and consistency. Shortfalls are managed by staff undertaking extra shifts. The Principal has recently appointed a member of staff to provide 'waking' night cover (not operational during this inspection). Current arrangements are for two members of staff to sleep in. Recent group dynamics combined with increasingly complex needs have resulted in periods where senior staff, including the Principal have been involved in dealing with incidents during the night. Whilst the motivation and commitment of staff is evident, the Principal questions the sustainability of continuing to operate at current staffing levels.

Staff working at the school value the support and training that they receive. The staff induction pack record, does not include child protection training. Some staff report receiving a handout. This handout states what to do in the event of a child protection issue arising. Not all staff are clear about how to report child protection concerns. Fire safety training has been arranged for March 2008. Some staff have not yet received fire safety training apart from being shown fire exits and the control panel.

Staff spoken to feel that they are given a high level of support, both from colleagues and senior staff. They report that they can always discuss issues or concerns and get advice as and when they need it. Formal one to one supervision is not happening on a regular basis. Care staff meetings and whole staff meetings are carried out weekly. Communication between all staff is good. Staff feel valued and are able to give their opinion.

Staff progress in NVQ attainment is varied. Long standing staff have achieved NVQ levels three and four. A number have achieved the registered manager award. Newer staff report registering for the NVQ process.

School records are monitored appropriately. The governing body continues to have vacancies. The chair of governors makes regular visits to the school and reports are devised.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

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

- ensure that where prescribed medicines are administered, the person giving the medicine witnesses it being dispensed from its original container (Medicines Act 1968). Full

consideration should be given to data protection when recording medicines in the controlled drugs book. (NMS 14.17)

- ensure that child protection policies and reporting procedures are known and fully understood by all staff. (NMS 5.1)
- ensure that risk assessments are carried out, recorded in writing and regularly reviewed. Risk assessments should include all elements of health and safety. (NMS 26.3)
- ensure that the school's recruitment procedure includes all of the elements described in this standard. (NMS 27.2)
- ensure that single comprehensive records are maintained for recording all elements listed in Standard 10.9 and Standard 10.14 (records of physical intervention and sanctions). Should records be held electronically, ensure a back up mechanism is in place. (NMS 10)
- ensure that each young person has a placement plan that includes all the elements listed in this standard. (NMS 17.5)
- ensure that each young person has a private and secure record of their history and progress. Individual records should be archived in a manner that will allow them to be seen by young people if they so wish. (NMS 18.1)
- ensure that staff receive training as listed in appendix two of the Residential Special School standards. Ensure that training enables staff to be clear about their reporting responsibilities and the procedures to be followed in the event that a child protection concerns arises. (NMS 29)
- ensure that all staff working in the school receive regular supervision. (NMS 30.2)