

Hunters Hill (Residential) School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Martha Nethaway
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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

Hunters Hill (Residential) School is a Special School providing residential boarding for a four night and five day educational placement. The school can cater for 75 pupils, girls and boys from the age of 11 to 16 years. The pupils who attend Hunters Hill School have been identified as having moderate learning, emotional and behavioural needs. Some pupils can have other associated health problems. The school is split across two sites and the grounds are attractive in pleasant countryside towards the south of Birmingham city. The homes are as follows and accommodate the following number and age range of children: Frobisher is a group home that accommodates five children over the age of 11 years, Raleigh is a group home that accommodates six children over the age of 11 years, Shackleton is a group home that accommodates five children over the age of 11 years, Scott is a group home that accommodates four children over the age of 11 years and Cropwood is a large group home that accommodates 27 young people over the age of 14 years.

Summary

This was an announced inspection that assessed the key National Minimum Standards (NMS). Children and young people's questionnaires were completed prior to the inspection visit. Parents, carers and stakeholders were also invited to complete questionnaires about the performance of the school. The inspection assessed the outcome groups for being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution and organisation. Over the course of the inspection, all of the residential accommodation was visited and time was spent with children and young people, residential staff, team leaders and managers. This inspection did not look at the admission or leaving processes for the young people or how the home prepares young people for adulthood. The inspection did not assess the environmental standards of accommodation. The overall quality rating for this setting is judged as good. Children and young people receive good quality care and education. Staff strive to provide a positive experience in relation to boarding life for children and young people. The high profile of sport and leisure activities is a key strength of the school from the children and young people's perspective. Children and young people are actively encouraged to be sociable and help each other. Staff maintain productive links with families and carers and this partnership approach is well balanced to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people. There is a strong integrated approach between the educational setting and the residential provision; staff are proud of this achievement.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, it was recommended that the school improve the way in which the service managed the medication arrangements at the homes. In particular, to provide a designated Controlled Drug Register, which the setting has now organised. This will ensure the procedures for managing medications are stringent. It was also recommended that the school provide residential staff with formal training in the safe handling of food. The school has implemented a training programme which will be fully completed by the autumn term. This will ensure that staff are well placed to handle food safely. The setting has addressed the recommendation related to organising the records for physical intervention to be included in the case files. Also

the complaints procedure has been updated. The school has reviewed its recruitment and selection procedures to ensure they are robust and comply with safe recruitment practice. Also, the role and the profile of the independent visitor as a trusted adult has been given greater prominence to the children and young people.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children and young people's physical, emotional and psychological health needs are being met. Staff receive good information that helps them to support children and young people's personal, social and health education. Staff provide excellent discussion groups and practical exercises to help children and young people's learning, understanding, perceptions about drugs, tobacco and alcohol. This is a whole-school approach with a broad range of well-planned topics of learning that are linked to practical learning outcomes. Staff obtain detailed information about children and young people's health needs at the initial home visit. This information underpins the placement plan for children and young people. Records clearly demonstrate that parents and carers hold primary responsibility for meeting children's health care needs. They are encouraged to inform staff of any changes so that case records correctly reflect current needs. Children and young people are provided with a simple health plan that brings together key information that staff need, to make sure children and young people are being kept well and healthy. The school has reviewed its policy and practice for the safe handling, management and administration of medications. There is also a planned programme to ensure all staff receive accredited training. This will include knowledge-based competence assessment in the work place. Staff are now provided with appropriate secure storage for medications and stringent systems are in place for auditing and monitoring of medication records. As a result, staff are managing medications correctly. Children and young people are encouraged to eat a healthy diet and participate in regular exercise. They recognise that starchy foods such as bread, pasta and rice are a really important part of a healthy diet. Staff regularly discuss the benefits of healthy eating and maintaining a healthy lifestyle for good growth. Children and young people commented that the school 'gives us good healthy food' and 'we eat healthily and we don't have fatty foods'.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The school continues to have a good focus on promoting the welfare and safeguarding children and young people. Staff are provided with clear guidance that is consistent with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. Staff recognise their professional responsibility to act on and report any welfare concerns about children and young people. Staff also receive in-house training. Children and young people know who the child protection co-ordinator is and are confident about approaching staff if they need to disclose information about their personal safety. Since the last inspection the school has had two child protection events. Children and young people receive good information about how they can make a complaint or raise a concern about any aspect of their boarding experience. In line with best practice they receive useful information in the pupil's prospectus and the complaints leaflet. The school has a clear system in operation to log all complaints received and children and young people regularly use this which helps to promote and protect their right to complain. Children and young people are provided with a good level of supervision and their whereabouts are carefully monitored. Staff are provided with good guidance and procedures should a child go missing from their

care. Staff ensure the risk assessments clearly identify previous behaviour patterns. The school has a clear reporting system in place for the police, social work team, parents and carers. Senior managers give good attention to site security by providing security cameras, door fobs and staff and visitor identification badges. This ensures children and young people's safety is given good prominence. Staff take positive steps to ensure fire safety is given a good priority. Records demonstrate that regular checks are being completed and the school liaises with the Local Fire and Rescue Authority in relation to fire safety issues. Children and young people learn how to protect themselves in an emergency because they have regular opportunities to practise the evacuation procedures and staff keep a record of the practice. Children and young people's privacy is respected and staff know how to deal with and share confidential information. Children and young people are encouraged to manage their own personal hygiene and self-care which promotes their independence and helps to preserve their dignity. Children and young people receive a user-friendly 'Code of Conduct' that straightforwardly explains what the rules are for everyone so that they feel safe and happy. They are also provided with clear information on 'Anti-Bullying' and the school has a zero tolerance to bullying behaviours. For example, children and young people commented, 'Yes I have seen people get bullied and I have seen people sort it out'. Children and young people are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour. Staff use the 'Pupil Progress Scheme' to actively reward behavioural targets and marks are earned for social skills, helpfulness and a whole range of other skillsets. Children and young people are recognised for their achievements at the 'Final Assembly', at the end of the school week. This engenders the school's philosophy to reinforce positive self-discipline and social behaviour. Staff are trained in the use of physical intervention. The use of physical intervention in the residential home is rare. The head of care analyses the use of restraint in the educational and residential setting to check for any emerging themes or patterns in order to ensure there is a systematic approach for the use of restraint. Similarly, there is a monitoring system in place for the application of sanctions. Children and young people are protected by the school's recruitment and selection procedures whereby all staff are appropriately vetted prior to working in the school. Personal records demonstrate a good procedure apart from one incident where the staff file did not demonstrate two written references being obtained. As a consequence, the school has not followed its own principles of safer recruitment.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children and young people continue to experience a high quality education. Staff are proud of the collaborative working relationships with the academic teaching staff and the residential care staff. Strong links are maintained between the school setting and the residential settings. The setting provides its own on-site educational facilities. Children and young people's academic progress is documented and the residential staff support 'reading for leisure' during children and young people's morning and evening recreational routines. The outcomes for children and young people are extremely positive and they clearly benefit from this concentrated approach to improving their reading skills. Staff show a huge commitment to enabling students to reach their full academic potential. Older students are engaged in a wide range of high quality work experiences and vocational courses such as technology, engineering, social and health education. They commented that staff are 'good at planning work experience'. Children and young people are able to access an independent person who provides an advocate role and this is widely published in the school literature and advertised on the house notice boards. Children and young people receive good care and support. Staff are knowledgeable about children and young people's individual needs. Children and young people are happy to board at Hunters Hill and

commented that staff are good at 'helping us when upset and helpful with our problems'. Children and young people form positive relationships with staff. Staff work extremely hard at creating a secure and caring environment. Children and young people's personal growth, development and self-esteem are strongly focussed on by the staff. Children and young people participate in a wide range of activities that encourages their social development and confidence. Children and young people commented that activities are excellent, 'I go to the local youth club' and about 'taking students on visits to France, Germany, Italy and camping in Wales and staff are fun and caring'. Sport features prominently in children and young people's boarding lives. Staff manage risks successfully in relation to sporting activities. The school promotes equality and diversity, this incorporates a strong awareness of disability and specific learning needs. Children and young people are involved in 'Black History Month', 'Racism Awareness' and themed weeks related to different cultures and food. The school adopts broad Christian values whereby children and young people say grace or give thanks at mealtimes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The positive attitude of staff in helping children and young people is a key factor that contributes to good quality care experiences. Children and young people are provided with a clear plan for their care and support; this is illustrated in the placement plans implemented by staff. They make every effort to develop strong and positive relationships with parents and carers and other professionals with the shared aim of working in the best interests of the child. Staff routinely seek children and young people's views about day-to-day living. The school council is given a good profile and children and young people are able to represent their ideas in a meaningful way. Staff demonstrate that they value the views and opinions of children and young people. The school provides a family flat for visiting parents and carers. Children and young people's contact arrangements are clearly recorded in their case notes.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children and young people benefit from a well organised school that has positive outcomes for their care and education. Staff are well versed about the ethos and the general aims of the school. The school has an up-to-date Statement of Purpose and School Prospectus. In addition, children and young people also receive a pupil prospectus that is user friendly and carefully explains what they can expect from their boarding experience. The quality and vision of the management is strong. The values and commitment of the head teacher is fundamental to the success of the school's overall effectiveness. A strong focus is given to working collaboratively with parents, carers and other stakeholders. Key professionals commented about the school's proactive approach that 'makes strident efforts to develop partnerships, working with parents and other agencies in supporting the young people'. The head of care is well qualified and suitably skilled and works closely alongside care and education staff. The head of care frequently visits the residential accommodation to monitor the standard of care, safety and relationships between children and staff. Children and young people receive good support because the staff team are experienced and suitably qualified. Staff are trained so that they are equipped to meet the demanding roles of providing good quality care and education to help achieve the

best outcomes for children and young people. Children and young people continue to benefit because staff manage their time well and staff are well deployed. The rotas are flexible to meet the busy times of the day and teaching staff are involved in the out of school activities. The setting is in the process of implementing a quality assurance programme to capture children and young people's experiences and demonstrate through self-evaluation how this process contributes to continuous improvement. The Every Child Matters agenda outcomes is helping to inform the quality assurance system.

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 at least two written references, including one from the most recent employer, with a reference request that specifically asks all referees to state any known reason why the person should not be employed to work with children and that there should be no material mis-statement or omission relevant to the suitability of the applicant. NMS 27.1 (3)
- ensure the quality assurance function captures the children's experiences and demonstrate how the service is being measured and improved upon. NMS 32.4.

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for residential special school

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted (NMS 14)
- children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs (NMS 15)

Ofsted considers 14 the key standard to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled (NMS 3)
- children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration (NMS 4)
- the welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse (NMS 5)
- children are protected from bullying (NMS 6)
- all significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified to the appropriate authorities by the head of the school or designated person (NMS 7)
- children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return (NMS 8)
- children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour (NMS 10)
- children live in schools that provide physical safety and security (NMS 26)
- there is careful selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers (NMS 27)

Ofsted considers 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 26 and 27 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school (NMS 12)
- children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities within the school and in the local community (NMS 13)
- children receive individual support when they need it (NMS 22)

Ofsted considers 12 and 22 the key standards to be inspected.

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run; no child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views (NMS 2)
- children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect (NMS 9)
- children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes (NMS 11)

- children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school (NMS 17)
- in accordance with their wishes children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while at school (NMS 20)

Ofsted considers 2, 17 and 20 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children can wear their own clothing outside school time, can secure personal requisites and stationery while at school, and are helped to look after their own money (NMS 16)
- children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living (NMS 21)
- children live in well designed and pleasant premises, which provide sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs
- children live in accommodation which is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use (NMS 24)
- children are able to carry out their personal care in privacy and with dignity (NMS 25)

Ofsted considers the key standard to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils (NMS 1)
- children's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions (NMS 18)
- there are adequate records of the staff and child groups of the school (NMS 19)
- children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently (NMS 28)
- children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs (NMS 29)
- children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare (NMS 30)
- children receive the care and services they need from competent staff (NMS 31)
- children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools (NMS 32)
- the governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school (NMS 33)

Ofsted considers 1, 28, 31 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.