

# Marland School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

---

<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC022231
<b>Inspection date</b>	20/01/2011
<b>Inspector</b>	Jim Palmer
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Key

---

<b>Setting address</b>	Devon County Council, Marland School, Peters Marland, Torrington, Devon, EX38 8QQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01805 601 324
<b>Email</b>	admin@marland.devon.sch.uk
<b>Registered person</b>	Devon County Council Education Department
<b>Head/ Principal</b>	Don Burton
<b>Nominated person</b>	Keith Bennett
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	08/10/2009

---

© Crown copyright 2011

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: [www.tso.co.uk/bookshop](http://www.tso.co.uk/bookshop)

## 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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

## 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 owned and operated by Devon County Council. It is a residential special school providing education and care for up to 40 male students, aged 11 to 16 years, who experience behavioural, emotional and/or social difficulties. Currently, at the time of Inspection, there are 33 young people boarding at the school.

The school is set in its own grounds in a rural location. The school main building houses the administration and boarding areas, some teaching areas, the school hall, main kitchen, dining room and laundry. Other separate classroom areas are located in detached units set behind the main building. Students have either a single bedroom, or share a bedroom with one other student. Residential accommodation includes common rooms and dining areas allocated to year groupings of students, and recreation rooms. Outdoor play areas and sports facilities are available in the school grounds. An additional leisure facility used by students is the school's woodland area, which is located approximately two miles from the main school site.

The school is developing a day school provision on a separate site.

### Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an announced inspection of all key standards, undertaken by one inspector over a three-day period. The inspection found that the school is continuing to develop some excellent practice in a number of innovative areas. In four of the six outcome groups the school is outstanding; however, as staying safe and economic well-being are judged as good, the overall judgement for the provision of care in the school remains good.

Strengths of the service are a high level of commitment to individual young people and a strong child-centred approach to working with young people, excellent leadership and management of the school, very good monitoring and the development of personalised learning.

Each of the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection have been met. The considerable investment in staff training and development continues. The monitoring of outcomes for young people continues to show improvements.

Areas of further improvement identified at this inspection are to develop policy and practice in the self-administration of young people's medicines where appropriate and to ensure that all newly appointed staff provide two suitable references prior to starting work.

## Improvements since the last inspection

Effective action has been taken to address the four recommendations made at the previous inspection. Menus are now planned and designed by the local authority catering and nutritional service, ensuring that a balanced and nutritional diet is provided. Lunchtime meals provide a salad, and a healthy option is made available for each evening meal. The school has introduced a new policy for safety testing all electrical equipment brought into the school by young people. Discussion with health and safety staff and examination of records show that all equipment is tested within 24 hours of being brought into the school. School governors have individual areas to examine during monitoring visits. The frequency of visits has increased and visits are now regularly taking place at least once each half term. The quality of reports is good. A significant investment in the residential accommodation has been made since the last inspection. This has improved the standard of the accommodation, décor and furnishings; however, the limitations of the building prevent a homely domestic style environment from being created. The improvements are continuing, however, so the recommendation from the previous inspection is met.

## Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's health care and good health outcomes continue to be promoted by the school. All young people have comprehensive health care plans, which are regularly reviewed and updated as necessary. Each young person is registered with a local doctor, dentist and optician. Where it is appropriate they may retain their previous health care professionals in order to promote continuity of health care. Young people's health records are kept securely in both electronic and paper form. These include the physical and emotional needs of each young person. Appropriate consents for medical treatment are held ensuring that prompt medical treatment can be provided. The school has good links with external specialist support services such as the child and adolescent mental health service, substance misuse services and paediatric services. Staff receive specialist training in specific physical and emotional health conditions in accordance with the needs of individual young people. All young people are given advice, support and guidance to help them make healthy lifestyle choices. There is a programme of support to young people who are striving to give up smoking for example. There is a very wide choice of physical activities designed to promote good health and in many cases promote emotional well-being.

All medicines are very securely stored and safely administered. Medicines are only administered to young people by a small staff group, each of whom are trained in the safe administration of medicines. A monitored dosage system is now in place and the administration of medicines is thoroughly recorded and regularly audited. Any refusal to take medicines is reported to the prescribing practitioner and any unused medicine is returned to the pharmacy and a receipt obtained. The school does not have a current policy on the self-administration of medicines by young people.

The menu provides a balanced and healthy diet for young people. The menu is designed by the county catering and dietary service in consultation with the school's catering manager. Young people are regularly consulted about dietary preferences and any dietary needs are well recorded and can be responded to. The arrangements for mealtimes have changed since the last inspection. Lunchtime meals now include a salad and are lighter than previously. The main meal of the day is now taken in the evening and a healthy option is available with each main meal. Young people are able to make drinks and have snacks between meals and supper. Young people say that they prefer the change in mealtimes and that the meals have improved since the last inspection. Meals are eaten in groups and are shared by young people and staff. Young people are encouraged to develop good social skills at mealtimes and they are pleasant social occasions.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

The safety and welfare of young people are promoted by the school. There are robust systems in place to ensure that young people are kept safe. All staff receive training in the promotion of privacy and confidentiality and are aware of the need to keep information securely and not to share information with others unless on a need-to-know basis in the interests of protecting a young person's safety. Young people say that staff knock and call out before entering bedrooms and they are able to be private from staff and other boys in the shower rooms. Young people say that they are happy with the arrangements for accessing a telephone and making calls in private. A public telephone is situated in a private booth and personal mobile telephones may be used. Staff are vigilant regarding misuse of telephones, particularly telephones with cameras which are discouraged but not banned.

There are clear procedures for making complaints, that are known to young people and staff. All complaints are well recorded, detailing the nature of the complaint, action taken and the outcome. The complaints records are regularly monitored by senior managers. Young people confirm that they are given information prior to being admitted to the school and that they know to whom they would raise any concerns. Two complaints are recorded since the last inspection.

All school staff receive regular training in safeguarding and the designated safeguarding lead has close links with the local authority designated officer and the multi-agency safeguarding hub who provide guidance and training for staff. Despite the impressive level of staff training in safeguarding awareness, not all staff members are fully confident about how to respond to potential allegations against colleagues.

Staff are aware of the potential for bullying and remain vigilant for any incidents. Young people say that bullying does occur at times, but that it is well managed and responded to quickly. The monitoring of bullying incidents shows an annual reduction in numbers in the last three years. Staff are proactive in managing bullying, with anti-bullying posters being prominently displayed, and through discussion in key

worker sessions and tutorials. Incidents are referred to a bullying panel for discussion with the people concerned. Staff are able to discuss strategies for reducing incidents of bullying regularly with young people.

All significant incidents are well recorded and monitored, regular notifications are made to appropriate agencies and to young people's families. Communication between the school and parents is good and parents and placing officers comment on good communication; however, in one instance a parent complained of a significant delay in being advised of an incident.

Staff are excellent at being aware of the whereabouts of young people. There are robust policies and procedures that are followed when a young person is missing or is absent without authority. Any absence is promptly reported to the necessary agencies and direct work is undertaken on a young person's return, to establish any reasons for them leaving the school without authority. Staff liaise closely with external agencies in order to reduce the number of absences. Monitoring records show a small increase in absences, however, this is from a significantly reduced number of young people who go missing. The senior leadership team is proactive in managing the number of absences and take strategic decisions in order to reduce the frequency, such as reviewing each young person regularly and developing positive behaviour management techniques.

Young people are supported in developing positive behaviours and good social skills by a very well-developed behaviour management system which is based on reward, praise, recognition of achievement and self-esteem building. Each young person has an individual risk assessment and personal intervention plan, which are regularly reviewed. There are clear expectations and young people are given clear boundaries. All young people are consulted and involved in setting personal targets. A recent outstanding development is the introduction of 'Thrive', a specialist research-based programme for staff, designed to explore ways of understanding behaviours and providing positive learning experiences for young people who display complex behaviours. Staff also receive regular training in an approved method of physical intervention. Young people say that they are helped in developing positive behaviours. They say that the sanctions used are fair and reasonable and when they do need to be restrained it is to protect the safety of themselves or others. All sanctions and physical interventions are well recorded and monitored. The use of physical intervention and fixed-term exclusion show a significantly decreasing trend with zero permanent exclusions.

The safety of young people and staff is promoted by extensive use of risk assessments for the premises, activities, equipment and the environment. The fire safety records show that all staff receive regular fire safety training, and that equipment and call points are checked regularly. External fire safety consultants undertake annual fire safety checks. The fire safety risk assessment is reviewed annually. Fire drills are held at regular intervals. Visitors to the school are given fire safety information and their identity is checked. Young people's personal electronic equipment is now given a portable appliance test within 24 hours of being brought into the school. There is an emergency plan in place.

There is a good system in place to ensure the safe recruitment of staff, and the Chair and Vice Chair of the governors and six members of the Principal Leadership team have undertaken safe staff recruitment training. This is a very positive development. However, of the staff files checked one file only held a single reference. There is evidence that a second reference has been chased up, however at the time of inspection no further reference had been sought.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Residential care staff work closely with education staff to support the educational attainment of young people. There is excellent communication between care and education staff and each young person's development or any obstacles to progress are discussed at the beginning and end of every school day. Care staff help prepare young people to attend school each day, and discuss school work and progress made with young people when they return from school. The school operates a 24-hour curriculum, providing young people with a continuous learning environment.

Young people are encouraged to participate in a wide range of leisure and social activities in the community and within the school. Young people say that there is always a great deal of choice and that they are kept fully engaged in activities. The staff are extremely proactive in seeking individual activities which meet personal interests and needs, develop community cohesion and develop life and social skills for young people. These activities include church bell ringing, circus skills, ice hockey coaching, army cadets, football, computer games, and swimming. The range of activities and the individual personalisation are impressive. The school has successfully negotiated that all young people attending the school are able to access a leisure activity programme operated by the local authority in which each young person receives an annual allowance enabling free entry into a number of leisure centres and activities across the county. This is available to young people and their families during school holiday periods. This is an area of outstanding practice.

Young people's needs are very well identified and education and care staff work consistently to meet needs in an innovative and proactive manner. Each young person has a personalised learning plan, in which partner agencies such as Connexions, local work experience placements, child and adolescent mental health services and other specialist agencies are able to provide a cohesive network of services to meet highly individualised needs. This approach demonstrates a high level of commitment to enabling each young person to maximise their potential in a multidisciplinary setting. This includes funding specific staff time to teach activities such as a vehicle workshop or horticultural department. The school is also encouraging community-based support to young people and their families. These are outstanding areas of practice development.

## Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

All young people are encouraged to contribute to the day-to-day running of this school. There are many opportunities to seek the views of young people through school council meetings, individual tutorials, key worker meetings, assemblies and annual reviews. The school regularly seeks the views of young people through questionnaires and surveys. Young people say that they are encouraged to express their views and that they feel their views are given due consideration. For example, some young people say the changes to the meal arrangements are as a result of consultation with them. All young people are invited to attend their annual education review or in some cases a child in care review. The school is currently introducing person-centred reviews for young people. This model of meeting encourages the positive involvement and interaction between parents, young people and staff. One review was observed during the inspection; this provided an open inclusive forum for developing shared positive outcomes. The environment of the meetings provides a positive opportunity for joint planning; the young person is able to contribute fully and remains the focus of the discussion. This provides an outstanding opportunity for engaging young people in the planning for their futures. Young people also have the opportunity to contribute to county events seeking the views of young people, such as the North Devon Student Voice conference encouraging wider community-based participation.

Relationships between young people and staff are observed to be very good and based on mutual respect. Clear expectations are made of each young person, and staff display a good knowledge of the wishes and plans for each young person. Staff are caring and understanding of the needs of each young person, and are able to establish clear boundaries while being supportive and empathetic with each young person.

The admission and leaving of young people are very well managed. All young people spoken with said they were able to visit the school prior to their admission and that any questions that they or their families had were answered. Each young person has an introduction booklet which provides information for young people, to help them settle into the school. Transitions from the school are also well planned. The recently established personalised learning team are able to provide highly individualised support packages to enable successful transitions from the school into the community. Each young person receives advice and guidance, including contacts with other agencies such as the Connexions service in the area in which they will be living.

Each young person has a comprehensive placement plan, which details how their identified needs will be met while at the school. Placement plans are regularly reviewed and updated and include the physical and emotional needs, contact arrangements and any religious, cultural or language needs. The plans are held in both electronic and paper formats. All confidential information is securely held and can be accessed by all staff authorised to do so. Each young person is allocated a

key worker and regular one-to-one meetings take place. Staff display a high level of knowledge regarding the plan for each young person. Any information not provided prior to admission is sought shortly after; case records detail any changes in assessed needs and any developments that take place. Any changes to the plan are notified to parents or placing officers. Each young person's development is monitored regularly in weekly staff meetings. The school facilitates and contributes to the young person's review and positively supports them in being able to attend and contribute.

Staff regularly contact parents to keep them informed of progress and developments. They promote and support young people's contact with families. Families are welcomed in the school and are invited to attend school events and meetings. Staff are receiving training in working with families and are able to provide community-based support, advice and guidance to young people and their families. This is an area that is continually being developed and is of great benefit to young people and their families. The staff work jointly with children's services when necessary in order to meet the needs of young people.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Young people wear their own clothes outside of the school day. They are able to choose and use their own personal requisites and toiletries. Each young person has a facility for keeping any personal items securely in their bedrooms. Young people say that they have sufficient storage space for their personal items and clothes. They are able to personalise their bedrooms if they wish to. Any electronic equipment or games that young people bring to the school are safety tested shortly after being brought into the school.

All Year 11 young people are supported in developing the skills they will need to make a successful transition into adulthood. They have regular contact with a Connexions service advisor and are supported by the personal learning team who are able to provide individually tailored packages specifically designed for each young person. This may include seeking and providing suitable work experience placements and the funding of specialist support depending on the identified needs of each young person. This support may include the temporary employment of specific work skills instructors or providing multidisciplinary support in the community. This is an outstanding area of service development.

The boarding accommodation is located on the first floor of the main school building above some classrooms, assembly hall and some of the administrative offices and kitchen. There is no physical separation between the boarding accommodation and the remainder of the main school building. This is far from ideal and it is very difficult to create a homely environment without the ability to separate living areas from the teaching areas of the school. Despite the considerable efforts of the staff it is not possible to create a domestic family-type environment in the current building. The limitations of the building detract from some of the excellent work being carried out

by staff, for example, the location of the semi-independence flat, used by young people in transition.

There has been a significant investment in improving the physical environment of the residential area since the last inspection. The bedroom area has been decorated throughout, with new beds and bedroom furniture, new carpets and flat screen televisions fitted in most bedrooms. The main bedroom corridor has also been redecorated and refurbished; however, because of the design, this looks unattractive and utilitarian. Lounge areas are also significantly improved with new leather settees, robust oak furniture and new carpets and décor. However, as a result of the building design it is still difficult to create a homely residential environment. The school continues to improve the physical environment whenever funding is available.

The recently refurbished toilet and shower rooms are clean, well maintained and odour free. Young people say that their privacy is respected when using the facilities. Any minor damage is repaired very quickly by the maintenance team and cleanliness is excellent throughout the living area.

The senior leadership team is aware of the limitations of the building and continues to seek funding for new residential accommodation; however, despite the present improvements the physical environment detracts from other areas of outstanding practice. A judgement of good is made in this outcome group in recognition of the improvements made to the physical environment; however, despite these considerable efforts the accommodation remains less than ideal.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

The school prospectus and young person's guide are clear and accurately reflect the services that the school can provide and how they intend to meet the needs of young people. Both documents are reviewed annually and young people say that the information they are given is helpful and any queries they may have prior to admission are readily answered.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Staff continue to receive training and the school provides an excellent personalisation programme for all young people. This demonstrates some areas of outstanding practice and development as reported in each outcome area. Equality and diversity are promoted through themed assemblies, developing links with local, national and international charities and extensively promoted through the school curriculum. The school is also developing student links with other schools and inner-city environments to promote links with different cultural and social backgrounds. The school has a continuing action plan to develop practice in the promotion of equality aimed at ensuring that practice in this area is fully embedded within all staff groups.

Young people's progress and developments are well recorded and files and school records are thoroughly completed, up to date and well ordered. All school records

are held securely and archived safely. There is extensive use of both electronic and manual records.

The school has sufficient staff to adequately meet the needs of young people; most absences are covered by existing staff working additional hours. Staff stability is good and this provides excellent continuity of care to young people. All staff are clear about their levels of responsibility and there are very good lines of communication and support to staff at all times. Managers are available to staff and young people and are seen as supportive. Staff say they are very well supported by senior managers, and young people say that they can talk to anyone they want to about any concerns they have. All staff demonstrate a considerable commitment to providing a focus on young people's individual needs.

The senior leadership team is committed to staff development. The training programme is impressive and staff are encouraged to take responsibility for developing innovative areas of practice and any special interest. This is demonstrated in areas such as behavioural support, the personalised learning team and personalisation programme, person-centred reviews and working with families. The number of residential staff with National Vocational Qualifications at levels 3 and 4 exceeds the national minimum standard. All staff receive a comprehensive induction training programme, regular supervision and performance review. Staff confidence and morale are good; young people benefit from being cared for by skilled and competent staff.

Extremely clear and strong leadership is provided by the Principal and the senior management team. The school is well managed and the quality of the service is regularly reviewed. The school is outstanding at recording and analysing outcomes. Patterns and trends are well monitored and effective management action is taken. The senior management team continually seek ways of improving the quality of the service and develop to improve outcomes for young people. The development of new areas of child-focused practice such as the personalisation programme, person-centred reviews and family support work is outstanding.

The frequency of monitoring visits by members of the governing body has improved and the recommendation arising from the two previous inspections is now met. The school's finances are regularly monitored and reported on in management reports. The school has a very comprehensive development plan.

## **What must be done to secure future improvement?**

### **Compliance with national minimum standards**

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- ensure that any child who is enabled to keep and administer their own

- medication is assessed as responsible to do so (NMS 14.19)
- ensure that the system for recruiting staff includes all the elements listed in the national minimum standard, namely that at least two written references are gained prior to a staff member commencing working. (NMS 27.2)