Dorton House School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.\(^1\),\(^2\)

Information about the school

Dorton House School is a non-maintained co-educational establishment, run by the Royal London Society for the Blind, based in Seal, near Sevenoaks, Kent. The school provides boarding and education for children and young people with a wide range of visual impairment and other very complex physical needs. Residential pupils come from a number of different localities across the home counties and a combination of day and weekly boarding pupils are accommodated. Residential pupils are looked after by a team of care staff, and are further supported by a team of qualified teachers, therapists and nurses. At the time of this inspection there was one residential pupil placed.

\(^2\) www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.
Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of Dorton House is satisfactory. The school provides an appropriate and suitable boarding experience which has a supportive impact on residential pupils personal development. Staff level of commitment to the development of residential pupils/learners is consistent. This is achieved through clear communication between all parties involved in residential pupils care. The links between the school and the residential provision means that residential pupils enjoy a positive experience and shared targets.

- Dorton House promotes and safeguards all the residential pupils and learners welfare. There is a named designated child protection officer, who is known throughout the school. Safeguarding is paramount to the care and safety of all children. There is an appropriate level of support and clear measures of security throughout the school and the residential setting.

- The residential provision at Dorton House is managed and organised well. A warm, comfortable and homely atmosphere has been created by staff. Residential pupils are comfortable in their surroundings. Each residential setting is unique providing a special atmosphere that residential pupils respond positively to.

- The boarding house runs smoothly on a daily basis and residential pupils receive appropriate care and support from staff.

- Since the last inspection the school has acted on the recommendations from the previous inspection. The improvements made relate to the school now thoroughly investigating any issues of concerns relating to complaints, bullying or safeguarding. Pupil risk assessments are monitored appropriately and the monitoring visits undertaken by an independent visitor are now completed.
The school meets almost all of the national minimum standards. The areas identified for improvement are: the manager to have a clearer overview of training and development updates for staff; the medication, missing person's and transitional plans for residential pupils moving on or leaving care to be reviewed; updating of the Statement of Purpose, residential pupils placement plans and individual personal evacuation procedures.
Outcomes for residential pupils

The outcomes for residential pupils are good. Residential pupils’ social development is enhanced by positive and constructive relationships with staff and with each other. There are good mechanisms whereby residential pupils can contribute their views, either through the student meetings or key working sessions.

Residential pupils have developed good resilience and self esteem since residing in the school. This contributes to their overall social development and exposure to the wider community. Residential pupils have gained appropriate experiences and skills to support them on activities such as coin recognition and shopping. This is detailed in residential pupils’ placement/care plans with robust steps of achievement, independence and confidence. Residential pupils are also encouraged to take part in various sporting activities such as canoeing, sailing, swimming and skiing. All activities are risk assessed appropriately according to pupils’ needs.

Residential pupils know that staff are interested in their views, wishes and feelings. They have various opportunities to meet regularly with staff, senior managers and governors, to make their contributions to the running and operation of their home and the school. Key working sessions are effective in addressing individual students’ placement progress, but also to gauge their opinions. This ensures that they are listened to at times when they feel safe and comfortable. Issues such as menu planning and recreational activities are discussed weekly in student meetings.

Residential pupils communicate in a variety of ways using a number of communication methods. These include Braille, Makaton, body language and facial expressions; these are well known and understood by staff.

Residential pupils residential experience is extensive. They gain practical experiences and are able to take advantage of learning and developing their individual skills, therefore, opening new horizons to various experiences and talents.

Where residential pupils are approaching the time to move on or leave the school, there is agreement in place with their responsible authorities. However, not all information regarding the residential pupils transition is addressed in their placement/care plan, therefore it was unclear what support is in place to ensure a smooth transition.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the boarding provision and care is satisfactory. Staff provide residential pupils with appropriate pastoral care and support for personal and academic development. There is a sound induction process in place that makes new residential pupils feel comfortable. Residential pupils benefit from the effective working relationship between parents, carers, residential staff and teaching staff. There are
frequent meetings that explore the educational and pastoral needs of pupils which enhances their overall well-being and developmental needs.

Residential pupils' health is protected and promoted. There are well-managed health care arrangements. The on-site medical centre supports all pupils within the school. Case files contain background information about pupils' medical and health care needs and on how they would like to be supported. The staff have effective working relationships with the health care professionals that ensure physical, emotional and psychological health needs are appropriately met. The school employs a speech and language therapist and other professionals to support pupils and staff. Residential pupils clearly benefit from this additional support. Parents have the opportunity to register with their General Practitioner and most do so. In addition to this parents also give permission for emergency treatment.

The safe handling of medication is appropriately managed in this school. The school may use over the counter medication and this is agreed by parents. Staff receive regular training in the safe handling of medication. Medication is accurately recorded and the nurses undertake regular checks for additional safeguards. There is always at least one member of staff on duty who is trained to give first aid. However, the medication policy does not reflect all the procedures undertaken by staff such as receiving and disposing of medicines and how training is undertaken. All accidents are recorded and first aid is given as appropriate.

The catering arrangements meet the needs of the pupils. The main meal is provided centrally and breakfast and dinner are provided in the residential home. All residential pupils can contribute to the residential menu planning. To assist residential pupils in their daily choice, pictures and Braille scripts are displayed at the entrance to the home. Therefore, if anyone is unhappy with the daily choice an alternative can be made. Residential pupils receive a balanced and nutritious meal, which meets their dietary and cultural requirements.

The quality of the residential accommodation provides residential pupils with a safe, comfortable and secure home. Each residential pupil has a swipe card to enter the home and other places throughout the campus. Some bedrooms have personal key codes for added security. Residential pupils can, if they so wish, personalise their bedrooms and they are encouraged to display any certificates of achievement or merit. All communal areas are of good size and bright, complementing the needs and abilities of each residential pupils.

Residential pupils’ placement plans identify the needs and abilities of the individual and how the provision in conjunction with others will address their needs. Each residential pupil has a key and co-key worker who supports and understands their needs. Staff’s documentation and placement plan records are regularly reviewed to reflect residential pupils changing needs. Care plans include the full range of care needs including health, activities and education. There is clear attention paid to issues of equality and diversity, particularly in relation to disability and religion.
Residential pupils, their parents, and other professionals contribute to the formation of the placement plan, setting clear targets and goals which are reviewed regularly.

There are clear arrangements for residential pupils to keep in touch with family and friends, mainly through telephone contact.

**Residential pupils’ safety**

The school makes satisfactory provision to safeguard boarders’ welfare. All residential pupils and learners are protected by the school’s safeguarding policy and procedures. The head of care is the designated child protection officer and is supported by three other members of the senior staffing team. The policy and procedure is underpinned by training provided to all staff. The head of care make good use of external support for advice and guidance. However, although there is an absconding/unauthorised absence policy in place it does not include any information on the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols and procedures.

Positive behaviour is promoted. Restraint is only used, in strict accordance with the legislative framework.

The safety of residential pupils is further promoted through the careful recruitment of staff and appropriate checking of other adults who have contact with pupils via the school. Senior members of staff have completed safer recruitment training and interviews do not take place without at least one trained representative on the panel. Staff receive induction training and are provided with a detailed induction pack. The impact on these arrangements is that students feel safe and are protected from harm.

There are clear procedures on how investigations into allegations or suspicions of harm are addressed.

Health and safety around the school and residential setting is maintained. The environment is physically safe and appropriately secure. All equipment is regularly maintained and repaired. There are clear procedures with regards to security of the building. All staff are aware of the procedures to follow in the event of a fire. Each member of staff on duty is assigned a designated role. However, where a residential pupil may have some difficulties with their mobility or behaviour, there is no specific guidance to assist staff to manage this in the event of an emergency.

**Leadership and management of the residential provision**

The leadership and management of the residential provision are satisfactory. The senior management team knows what the services strengths and weaknesses are and have made improvements which benefit the residential pupils. The senior management team ensure that the safety and welfare of boarders is paramount to
their care and well being. The Statement of Purpose does follow the guidance as set out in the National Minimum Standard. However, the document does not fully highlight all the services provided such as emergency placements or the staffing structure.

Overall, parents are very happy with all aspects of the care provided. They agree that residential pupils make positive progress through the residential provision. Any complaints or concerns are promptly dealt with and recorded outlining the resolution and the level of satisfaction of the complainant.

There is a sufficient number of staff on duty at all times to supervise residential pupils effectively. The boarding staff are effective in maintaining appropriate discipline and promoting sound pastoral care. Therefore, any activities within the school or the community are appropriately supported according to the needs of each child.

Staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the residential pupils they support. However, not all training updates have been consistently monitored or undertaken. Not all existing care staff have attained a relevant minimum level 3 qualification as set out in the national minimum standards.

Regular monitoring visits are carried out by a member of the governing body. The care and welfare of residential pupils are reviewed as part of this process. Recommendations are made. However, when a recommendation is made and addressed the following report does not consistently reflect this.

**National minimum standards**

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.

- Staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children as they relate to the purpose of the setting. Training keeps them up-to-date with professional, legal and practice developments and reflects the policies, legal obligations and business needs of the school. (NMS 19.1)

- The school has, and implements, appropriate policies for the care of children who are unwell. These include first aid, care of those with chronic conditions and disabilities, administration of medicines and dealing with medical emergencies. The provision of accommodation for children who are unwell has regard to any requirements set out in regulations relating to school premises. (NMS 3.6)

- Staff with management responsibilities have an adequate level of experience or training in the management and practice of boarding to ensure that children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted. (NMS 13.2)

- Where a child is in care and will be leaving care on leaving the school, the school
agrees with the young person's responsible authority what contribution it should make to implement any Pathway or other plan for the child before the child leaves school. These arrangements should support that young person's needs, and promote a smooth transition. (NMS 2.7)

- The school's procedures are compatible with the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care (RMFHC) protocols and procedures applicable to the area where the school is located. Where children placed out of authority go missing, the Head of Care follows the local RMFHC protocol and complies with and makes staff aware of any other processes required by the placing authority. (NMS 15.7)

- The school has regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State 'Health and Safety: Department for Education Advice on Legal Duties and Powers for Local Authorities, Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies' (as referenced in 'Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards'). (NMS 6.2)

What should the school do to improve further?

- consider having in place for each boarder a personal evacuation emergency plans
- review the content of the care files.
07/02/2012

Inspection of Dorton House Residential Special School, Seal, Sevenoaks, KENT

**Inspection of Dorton House School**

As you will know, Ofsted recently inspected the boarding provision in your school. I thank you, your parents and staff for completing questionnaires that helped me understand what you all think about School House. Your comments are important in helping me judge Dorton House as being a satisfactory service.

The care staff team work hard to make sure your individual needs are well met by the service. I know that this commitment has helped you in your overall development. You enjoy being a part of the school and you feel safe and well cared for by staff.

You enjoy a wide range of activities like going out into the community and shopping. You are learning skills to help you move on in life.

Staff ensure you live a healthy lifestyle and that you do your very best in the classroom.

The residential home is very comfortable with some very cool equipment! Staff are very interested in what you and your parents have to say about the service.

The inspection did find that there are some areas that can be improved, such as the medication and missing person’s policies, training updates for staff and the fire and moving on plans for you.

Yours sincerely,

Karen Malcolm