

# Marland School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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**Inspector** Paula Lahey / Janice Hawtin

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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.<sup>1,2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

Marland School is a local authority maintained residential special school. It provides care and education during term time for up to 40 boys aged 10-16 years. The residential accommodation is provided in the main school building. The school is situated on the outskirts of a local town. It caters for young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The residential provision was last inspected in February 2012.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools).

## Inspection judgements

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>                           | <b>good</b> |
| Outcomes for residential pupils                        | good        |
| Quality of residential provision and care              | good        |
| Residential pupils' safety                             | good        |
| Leadership and management of the residential provision | outstanding |

## Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is good. The dedication, commitment and perseverance of staff results in each pupil achieving positive outcomes in their behaviour, well-being and safety.
- The school is an inclusive, caring and nurturing provision where there is a positive sense of community and of putting children's needs at the centre of practice. Pupils are given clear messages about their worth and as a result have a sense of belonging.
- There is strong promotion of equality and personalisation. This runs throughout all care practice and documentation. Each pupil is highly valued, treated fairly and is supported to reach their full potential.
- The nurturing approach to behaviour management has helped develop pupils' emotional intelligence; consequently, their skills of personal control, empathy and anger management are growing.
- Pupils report strong and positive bonds with members of the care staff; they value their care and respect. Pupils are supported to develop consideration and courtesy for each other and as a result peer relationships are generally positive.
- Positive feedback from pupils, families and professionals confirms pupils are kept safe and provided with good quality care and support to meet their identified objectives.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements are robust. Staff recognise the diverse and vulnerable needs of pupils and are diligent in ensuring they are protected. Experienced and knowledgeable senior staff take the lead for child protection.

- The residential provision is very well organised and managed. This is strengthened with a stable and experienced care team who demonstrate enthusiasm and passion for their work and aim high for each pupil.
- This motivated and determined school meets all the national minimum standards and since the last inspection has made excellent progress to embed good practice. Initiatives such as person-centred reviews, the 'Thrive' therapeutic approach, increased educational psychology assessment, revised mealtimes and home visit programmes continue to improve the quality of care and outcomes for pupils.
- Action has been taken in response to the shortfall in one national minimum standard identified at the last inspection. As a result, improved safeguarding systems are further embedded. Following this inspection three areas for improvement have been identified in order to develop the quality of provision further. These relate to improving records and enhancing the opportunities for pupils to discuss their personal development.

## **Outcomes for residential pupils**

The outcomes for residential pupils are good and they enjoy positive and constructive relationships, particularly with the care team and senior staff.

Staff work with pupils from their individual starting points, build upon their existing strengths, and support them to develop new ones. The residential experience provides pupils with stability, clear boundaries and effective support. This enables pupils to develop effective behaviour management strategies, independence skills, and improved self-esteem. Regardless of their starting points, all pupils have made good progress during their time at school. Families and professionals speak positively about the progress pupils have made. Comments include: 'My child is more confident in himself, his speech has improved and so has his social skills,' and, 'The school has turned my son around; he has improved 100 per cent. Without this school he was out of my control.'

The nurturing approach and excellent pastoral support is enabling pupils to develop resilience, self-worth and confidence. Pupils are positive about the support that they receive; they report feeling listened to, cared for and helped to develop good behaviour. Emotional-literacy approaches are helping pupils to develop positive social skills plus empathy and respect for others. This is particularly evident during daily meetings to choose activities; pupils listen well to staff and to each other and actively encourage others to take their place on certain groups if they feel they are more deserving.

Pupils respond well to the rewards system. It is evident that this has helped them to manage their behaviour more appropriately and promote their self-esteem. Some pupils have made significant improvements in reducing aggressive and violent

behaviour. One family says that this improvement has also extended to the home environment.

Pupils generally comment positively about the school; in particular they feel especially close to care staff and also enjoy the wide range of activities available to them. Both these elements effectively enhance pupil's psychological and physical health. Older pupils enjoy the additional responsibilities of budgeting, cooking and organising themselves during their stay in an independent flat. This programme has helped older pupils to develop life skills and prepare them for adulthood.

Pupils are actively involved in the student council and lounge group meetings. Pupils are provided with an annual budget with which they can choose equipment and/or activities for the residence. This year pupils have secured new televisions and surround-sound systems for the lounges and have access to regular magazines and iPads. Pupils particularly enjoy the weekly 'Ruby Tuesday' themed-cooking nights and the improvements in equipment used to make their own snacks.

## **Quality of residential provision and care**

The quality of the residential provision is good. The staff team are experienced, skilled and very child focused. The partnership working between care, education, specialist support staff and families provide the pupils with excellent pastoral care. The ethos is that of a nurturing environment in which pupils' needs are viewed holistically. Pupils are well supported by the continuity of care they receive. This helps them to build-up trust, form meaningful relationships, and take responsibility for their actions.

There is a collaborative and consultative approach to identifying and meeting pupil's individual health needs. Specialist needs are met with dignity and discretion, thus promoting pupils self-esteem and identity. Pupils are supported to understand the key risks to their health and wellbeing. This year, a number of pupils successfully engaged in a national smoking cessation course. All pupils receive personal and social guidance through the curriculum, led predominantly by education staff. The care provision does not currently utilise all opportunities to further enhance pupils learning regarding sexuality and relationships. Leaders have identified this as an area for further improvement, arranging staff training in this area.

Care planning is excellent. Initial assessment, admission, induction, setting individual objectives, and transition are highly personalised. Pupil's and family involvement has significantly increased due to the inclusive and needs-led focus of person-centred review meetings. Pupil's needs and views are central to all planning and the staff team actively promote this. A programme of home visits has been developed and this is proving successful at further involving families, sharing practice issues and providing opportunity for joint planning.

Pupils say that one of the best things about the school is the evening and weekend

activities known as 'groups'. Pupils choose from an extensive range of stimulating and exciting activities both on-site and in the community. The range of activities and the individual personalisation are impressive. Pupils are fully engaged and are developing their self-esteem, confidence, social skills and independence. The reward scheme actively motivates pupils to behave well, as this scheme results in increased access to community activities.

Pupils make good use of the communal areas and are instrumental in helping to choose decoration, function and personalisation of these areas. Pupils are provided with a wide range of equipment to help them develop information technology skills as well as to have fun. Pupils are pleased with the recent purchase of iPads, new computers and improved Wi-Fi facilities. The location of the residential accommodation makes it very difficult to create a domestic, family-style environment. The limitations of the building do not support the overall ethos of nurturing and valuing pupils that the school and staff team are committed to. The school recognises this and continues to invest money into making the current provision as homely as possible. Pupils are enthusiastic about the plans to refurbish their bedrooms over the coming year.

### **Residential pupils' safety**

The school makes good provision to safeguard pupil's welfare. Safeguarding continues to have a high priority within the school; families and professionals share this view. The staff team are very aware of their responsibilities and effectively implement policies, procedures and risk assessments. Pupils confirm that they feel safe and cared for and feel confident to approach a range of adults who they can share any worries or concerns with.

Staff are alert to pupils' vulnerabilities and closely monitor their welfare. They appropriately share any emerging concerns with experienced and suitably-trained senior staff. Any issues pupils raise are listened to and taken seriously. Since the last inspection leaders have further embedded an agreed protocol for sharing any concerns and managing allegations. Links with local safeguarding agencies including the local area designated officer, education welfare services and the police, are strong and positive.

The school successfully implements a positive behaviour management policy. There is effective use of de-escalation, clear boundaries and expectations, role modelling, the development of emotional intelligence, rewards and regular recognition of achievements. The overarching ethos is based on respecting each other and developing pupil's self-esteem and well-being. Relationships are positive, pupils feel safe and secure and their emotional needs are met. This in turn is having a positive effect on pupil's behaviour and self-control. Physical interventions are used only when necessary to support pupils who demonstrate physically unsafe behaviours. There is good analysis of incidents and it is evident that the use of restraint continues to reduce year on year. Pupils are actively encouraged to reflect on behaviour incidents

and staff take action in response to their views. However, records relating to this are not consistently documented.

Staff are aware of the potential for bullying and remain vigilant for any incidents. Pupils say that bullying is not a problem in the school; however, if conflicts occur these are well managed. A small number of pupils have occasionally absented themselves without permission. There is an immediate and appropriate response to ensure their safe and prompt return. The senior leadership team is proactive in managing any incidents. They work in partnership with pupils and their families in order to re-establish boundaries and implement agreed strategies to decrease the frequency of incidents.

Pupils' safety is promoted by an established health and safety policy. The requisite fire, utilities, health and safety checks are routinely undertaken routinely by the school to provide a safe and secure environment for pupils and staff. Pupils are familiar with fire evacuation procedures and are given regular reminders of health and safety matters affecting them. Recruitment and vetting systems are robust; staff trained in safer recruitment lead interviews and files contain all required information. However, the current application form does not lend itself to finding key information efficiently to assist in checking potential candidate's suitability.

## **Leadership and management of the residential provision**

The leadership and management of the residential provision is outstanding. The well organised and managed residential provision is an integral and highly valued part of the school community. Staff are clear about their individual and collective responsibilities and fully understand the overall aims for the provision and each pupil's individual objectives. There is commitment to provide pupils with structure and boundaries within a highly nurturing environment to enable them to be safe and secure within the provision and community. This ethos is successfully implemented in practice and as a result there is a good record for achieving positive outcomes for pupils.

This school has a number of strengths and a good record for delivering quality care and driving forward improvement. The senior leadership team has high expectations of themselves, the pupils and the staff team. Poor practice and behaviour is appropriately challenged and all parties are provided with support, clarity of expectations and guidance on how to make improvements.

The school has developed effective internal quality-monitoring systems and there is accurate and insightful evaluation of performance. Where areas for improvement emerge, the school recognises and manages them well. Development plans focus on securing improvements that positively affect pupils.

Since the last full inspection a number of practices have been successfully devised, established and embedded which have contributed to improving the quality of



provision and outcomes for pupils. Some examples include: increased educational psychology provision and additional care staff; upgraded information technology equipment for pupils; and improved community access due to the provision of additional vehicles.

Pupils benefit from a well-trained, suitably qualified, experienced and stable care team. Staffing levels and responsibilities are responsive to pupil's needs. Morale within the care team is very good; staff feel well supported by colleagues and more formal systems such as team meetings, supervision, good quality appraisals and regular training. Staff make effective use of support offered by the psychologist and mental health specialist to reflect on their practice and work with pupils.

Parents feel welcomed and very well supported by the school, and that staff listen to them. Key workers and tutors contact parents weekly and a programme of home visits has been implemented. This greatly supports families and provides opportunities to share practice ideas and strategies. One family say, 'The school is brilliant at supporting my child and me. They advise me and have taught me a lot about parenting.'

Pupils' views are actively sought, highly valued and play an important role in the day-to-day development of the residence and school. There are many opportunities for pupils to express their views through school council, lounge meetings, individual tutorials and key work sessions, assemblies and regular surveys. Pupils feel their views are given due consideration.

## **National minimum standards**

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

## **What should the school do to improve further?**

- Review recruitment records to improve clarity of information for employment and educational history and identifying suitable references.
- Ensure there are further opportunities for pupils to explore matters, for example in relation to sexuality and relationships within the care environment.
- Consistently evidence pupil's feedback following the application of sanctions and the action taken in response to students comments following the use of restraint.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



05/11/2012

Dear pupils

### **Inspection of Marland School**

Thank you for helping us with the recent inspection of your school.

In order to make our judgements we read through the surveys you completed, spoke with many of you, joined in with activities, read through records, spoke to staff and inspected the accommodation. We also spoke with some families, social workers and other professionals involved with the school.

We have decided that you are provided with a good quality service and as a result you are making good progress. We feel the staff have a very good understanding of your needs and they have high expectations for you to achieve. They are very committed to you and want you to do well.

We feel that you are valued and cared about, and as a result you have very good relationships with the staff and are developing good relationships with each other. We can see that you are making progress with learning how to control your behaviour both at school and at home.

We are very impressed by the range of activities you are able to join in with; we were very pleased to see that all of you were really enthusiastic about these. You told us that 'groups' and the care staff were the best thing about the school - we agreed with you. We have asked the staff to look at ways that they can further improve these areas by providing some opportunities to develop your understanding of relationships and sexuality in the residential time and not just in the classroom.

A number of you told us that you wanted the accommodation to be improved. We, and the school, agree with you and as you know there is a programme in place to improve the bedrooms over the coming year.

We have asked the school to ensure that they record your views on sanctions and also to record the action they have taken following your comments after a restraint. This will help the school to review how they are managing these areas. We were

pleased you like the new reward system and are taking advantage of the many awards available.

Yours sincerely,

Paula Lahey / Janice Hawtin