

Hunters Hill (Residential) 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

Hunters Hill Technology College is a residential special school providing residential boarding for up to four nights a week Monday to Friday. The school is maintained by Birmingham Local Education Authority and is situated on the south side of the city. The school is split across two sites and has five residential homes. The school caters for 120 pupils with a capacity for 75 residential placements. It accommodates both boys and girls aged 11 to 16 years old. Pupils attending Hunters Hill Technology College have been identified as having social, emotional, behavioural and specific learning difficulties. A number of pupils attending the school also have associated medical conditions. The residential provision was last inspected in February 2012.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	outstanding
Outcomes for residential pupils	outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	outstanding
Residential pupils' safety	outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	good

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- This is an outstanding service that proactively meets the individual needs of young people and effectively supports them to make outstanding personal progress to achieve their full potential.
- The school meets all the residential special schools national minimum Standards. At the last Ofsted inspection the service was judged to be outstanding overall. At this inspection they continue to be judged as outstanding overall with outstanding judgements in outcomes for young people, quality of care and safeguarding and a good judgement in leadership and management.
- There is a true commitment to promoting equality and diversity, which permeates throughout the school. This results in an environment where the individual is valued, their needs are promoted and their achievements celebrated.
- Pupils receive outstanding care from professional teams of consistent and dedicated staff. Pupils state that the high quality staff are a key strength of the school. Staff know the young people well and are skilful and caring in their interactions with them. Staff work together in a collaborative way in order to share learning and best practice for the benefit of the young people.
- Safeguarding is at the forefront of practice at the school. Policies, procedures, staff practice and training continues to be reviewed and developed in line with societal trends and behaviours, changes to legislation and the needs of the young people.
- The school's management is committed to continual improvement in the care it provides to pupils. They have a robust understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. This is because they evaluate practice, revise internal

systems and introduce new approaches in order to maximise the outcomes that pupils achieve.

- The school's partnership work with parents and other agencies is excellent. Clear focus on the individual needs of the child, effective communication and strategies result in outstanding progress and outcomes for pupils.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. They become socially able, with positive circles of friends and new hobbies and interests. They engage in learning and make significant personal educational progress. They develop independence skills that successfully enable them to transition smoothly on into further education. Pupils who have historically experienced difficulties in mainstream day schools now attend school on a regular basis and successfully achieve personal education targets. The school operates a wide range of strategies, which include the active involvements of parents and pupils in increasing attendance, meeting targets and improving learning outcomes. For example, levels of attendance are monitored and any concerns are quickly addressed. Where necessary individual strategies such as residential stays, are put in place. Transport is well organised and the school promotes courtesy towards all drivers. At the end of each term and year, 100% attendance is celebrated and rewarded.

Pupil success, at every level, is constantly celebrated and rewarded. As a result they feel valued and respected, as individuals, and as representatives of the school. All pupils, whether day or residential, are attached to a residential home and class group. Pupils are proud of their houses stating that theirs 'is the best'. They are supported by a consistent team of staff who they find 'fun', 'good listeners' and 'always there to help'.

Pupils know they are making outstanding progress because on a weekly basis they are involved in setting individual specific targets in the residential home and classroom. The improvements made in meeting these targets are mapped by the school's profiling system, which staff monitor and evaluate. A weekly 'celebration of achievements assembly' enables pupils to acknowledge and celebrate their own performance. Pupils value the systems and are proud of their achievements and the progress they have made. They also recognise and praise other's aspirations and achievements.

Pupils are active members of the school community. They contribute to the operation of the school and are involved in a wide range of school activities and projects. They develop excellent skills in interacting with others and become confident at expressing views and opinions. They feel any issues raised or opinions sought are acted upon.

Pupils make excellent progress in looking after their health and leading healthy lives. The promotion of a healthy lifestyle is successfully integrated into the ethos of the

school. For example, pupils are educated on how to live a healthy lifestyle through discussion groups in class and the residential homes. This covers healthy eating, exercise, environmental issues and drug awareness. This is reinforced by an extensive programme of physical activities, trips and external speakers. For example, this year for the first time all year 7 pupils had the opportunity to take part in a Bikeability course. All obtained a level 2 certificate.

Pupils' social development is outstanding. Pupils state that as a result of attending the school they make 'lifelong friends', 'go abroad for the first time', 'experience new activities' and 'become regular members of clubs'. Pupils continue to state a key strength of the school is the wide range of lunchtime, afternoon and evening activities and skills development sessions. Where appropriate, the school helps residential pupils develop new interests, then supports them to continue those interests in their own community from home. The whole ethos of the service is to reduce the need for residential stays by equipping pupils with the skills to sustain education from their home. The school is successful in achieving this aim.

Pupils successfully develop the skills they require for adulthood. Staff are able to tailor support depending upon the individual's needs and ability. It is the ethos of the school to involve and nurture pupils to develop life skills throughout their schooling and is a central theme to the residential experience. For example, one of the five residential homes specialises in promoting an environment that encourages independence for the more mature pupils. It also provides an opportunity for pupils to experience a positive house move and planned transition within the safety of the school. This residential provision works alongside education to promote a wide range of activities including work experience, college placements, independent travel to and from home, project work and practical skills sessions. As a result pupils develop positive self-esteem, have clear aims and objectives for the future and are confident members of the wider community.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of residential care is outstanding. Partnership agencies state 'communication is excellent', 'the school's systems ensure the best interests of the child are central to all decisions', 'parents are involved at every stage' and 'outcomes for pupils are impressive'.

The school embraces diversity and difference. Pupils receive a service, which is tailored to meet their personal needs. For example, the number of overnight stays each week varies from pupil to pupil. The length of stays are regularly reviewed and are often time limited with a specific objective to be met.

There are effective systems in place that ensure pupils achieve throughout their education. For example, where a pupil makes significant educational and social progress the school supports planned return to mainstream education. Throughout this transition process the school continues to work with the pupil to ensure success.

Mainstream schools who have been involved state, 'support to the pupils and the school throughout is outstanding', 'the support and structure around the child throughout transition is so effective they continue to make educational progress'.

Key stage 4 pupils learn valuable independence skills, undertake a range of work experience and leave the school able to maintain a college or work placement from their home. The school has a wide range of structures and systems in place that successfully enable pupils to become responsible adults. These continue to be reviewed and developed. Over the last year the school has increased transition coordinators to ensure pupils continue to make outstanding progress. Over the last four years all schools leavers left to attend a further educational or work based placement except one. All young people continue to be supported in those placements by the school.

Staff have excellent knowledge of each pupil. A comprehensive admission and induction process, an initial assessment during each pupil's first half-term, home visits, regular meetings and contact ensure there is clear up to date information on each pupil. This is effectively and appropriately shared within each staff team.

Staff are proactive in promoting awareness of others, citizenship, community involvement as well as global issues. For example, regular activity days based in the residential houses explore topics such as religion and festivals. The whole school celebrated Black history week, world book day, the Olympics and the Queen's Jubilee. Notice boards around the school promote anti-bullying, trips away and the school council.

Staff give time to ensure all members of the school community experience travel, other countries and cultures. Over the last year the school sent year seven and eight camping on the Gower in Wales. The whole of year nine went to the Ann Frank Museum in Amsterdam. Year nine went on a day trip to Boulogne.

Staff also provide ample opportunity for activities and exercise that includes cadets, food technology, craft skills, motor vehicles skills, model making, computers and many sporting activities including swimming and football. These activities are regularly reviewed and developed with pupil input. For example, over the last year the school have developed links with a youth club in the local community.

Pupils state that the food at the school 'is great', 'really enjoyable', 'tasty' and 'healthy'. The kitchen has a five star rating from environmental health. Menus include foods from different cultures, catering for pupil's dietary restrictions and requirements and encouraging them to try new and healthy dishes. The kitchen staff are actively involved in the life of the school and ensure that when there are activity days, such as the Jubilee and Olympics, the food served is in keeping with the theme.

The residential accommodation is of a good standard across the school campus. All

residential areas are cared for equally by the staff team and pupils. There has been maintenance work to improve the standard of accommodation with new carpets being fitted, new furnishings and redecoration. There is a development plan and rolling programme of work that ensures standards continue to be raised.

Residential pupils' safety

Pupil's safety continues to be outstanding. Pupils say that they feel safe at the school. They are systematically protected from harm by robust safeguarding arrangements. For example, there are effective comprehensive policies on ensuring the safety and wellbeing of pupils, which are known to pupils, parents, partner agencies and staff. These underpin an established programme of induction and training for all staff that includes listening to complaints, safeguarding, promoting positive behaviour, e-safety and anti-bullying. This ensures all policies are implemented successfully in practice.

Where incidents occur the school's leadership team are proactive in looking at lessons that can be learnt. They work with external agencies and professionals to develop staff, parent and pupil knowledge. For example, training is run for staff, workshops for pupils and information packs are sent out to parents.

Staff sensitively respect pupils need for privacy and confidentiality. They promote an open approach to complaints and successfully support pupils to make their views known. They do not tolerate bullying or any inappropriate behaviour and where issues arise they are well managed. All staff are very aware of the vulnerability issues of the young people they support. There is continual debate and discussion with regard to the important balance between promoting independence and keeping young people safe.

Incidents that do occur are managed in a way that allow pupils to consider the effect they are having on others and to address their mistakes. There are effective systems in place that monitor triggers and behaviours. The school is quick to identify and address concerns. For example, where there have been a series of incidents staff can refer a pupil for group anger management sessions. A young person stated, 'I made friends with others who experience similar feelings to me. We talked to each other, learnt lessons and supported each other not to get angry. It is one of my major areas of improvement.'

The school has excellent partnership arrangement with the local community police who speak positively of the proactive approaches used by the school when working with pupils and parents. The school involve the police in a range of social and educational events. This close involvement changes pupil perception of the police and their role. This outstanding work continues to be very successful.

Safeguarding pupils continues to be given a high priority within the school. All staff have completed training in safeguarding, and appropriate staff guidance and

safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and regularly reviewed. This ensures staff understand and are clear about what they should do if there is a safeguarding issue. They are therefore familiar with the referral process to the local authority children's services department.

Pupils continue to be protected by the school's robust recruitment systems. These ensure all staff employed complete the necessary recruitment checks and are deemed suitable to work before commencement of employment. A high number of staff have completed safer recruitment training. There is always a trained individual on any shortlisting and interview panel along with a school governor. These excellent practices further safeguard their welfare.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

Leadership and management are good. Pupils continue to benefit from a well-managed school that is having an outstanding impact on their developmental outcomes. At the last inspection the school was outstanding.

The school's Statement of Purpose sets out all required areas of information about the school and residential facilities. Pupils are admitted to the school in accordance with the Statement of Purpose. Parents are provided with information that details the provisions for residential accommodation at the school. Parent information on the school website is clear and accessible. The school continues to develop and support parents groups, parent governors and additional written parent information that helps parents support their children to achieve educationally.

Pupils feel strongly that a key strength of this service is the staff teams. Staff have constructive relationships with pupils and are supportive in assisting them to communicate their views and opinions and learn new skills. This positive engagement creates respectful relationships, which enable staff to have sensitive conversations with young people. These day-to-day discussions support young people to address difficulties and learn new skills to progress socially, emotionally and physically.

The staff team are positive in their approach to working with pupils. They achieve the best for the pupils in their care. Staff have access to a wide variety of training opportunities which ensures they are skilled, especially with regard to supporting pupils with challenging or high-risk behaviours. There are sufficient numbers of staff to meet the complex needs of the pupils and to support them in their activities. Any absences are covered from within the school staff team to ensure consistency of care.

The cohesion of the senior leadership team is a strength of the school. They have clear determination to continually raise standards in the delivery of care and education to pupils. As a result the school has substantial strengths and a sustained record of delivering outstanding performance and managing improvement. Where areas for improvement emerge the school recognises and manages them well.

Regular meetings ensure that all aspects of life in the school are discussed and monitored by the senior leadership team. There are good systems in place to monitor all aspects of boarding and these continue to be developed. The school development plan identifies areas for the future development of the school and residential provision.

National minimum standards

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

What should the school do to improve further?

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.



10/12/2012

Inspection of Hunters Hill (Residential) School

The residential provision at Hunters Hill Technology College has been judged to be outstanding overall.

There are outstanding outcomes for young people, outstanding quality care, outstanding systems for safeguarding and good leadership and management.

You told Ofsted the school has a number of strengths and continues to improve.

Some of the key strengths you identified were the wide range of activities and hobbies organised by the school. School trips, especially those abroad. The supportive, helpful, fun staff teams in the houses. The progress you have made since being at the school. The friendships you have developed. The food served in the school kitchen.

Yours sincerely,

Dawn Bennett