

Ash Field School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Date of last inspection	30 January 2008

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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

Ash Field School is a residential special school for boys and girls who primarily have physical disabilities. Some also have a learning disability and or communication difficulties.

The residence is sited on the ground floor, running on a flexi-boarding basis, with up to 18 students staying at any one time. Some students stay only for an 'extended school day' visit. These students stay only for tea and activities. All students stay on a voluntary basis.

The school is close to bus routes into Leicester and is on the outskirts of the city. The residence also incorporates an independent living flat, where up to two students can reside to practise their independence skills.

Summary

This inspection was an announced key inspection and covered all the key National Minimum Standards. The quality of boarding is outstanding. Judgements have been made for each individual outcome area as follows: 'Staying Safe', 'Making a Positive Contribution', 'Enjoying and Achieving', 'Being Healthy' and 'Organisation' are all judged as 'Outstanding', and 'Economic wellbeing' is judged as 'Good'.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The two recommendations set at the last inspection have been achieved. Action has been taken to ensure that all checks on the fire system are regularly recorded and that parents know how to contact Ofsted should they wish to make a complaint. The details of how to make a complaint to Ofsted have now been added to the schools complaints procedure.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are knowledgeable and well trained in meeting the health care needs of the students. This, in turn ensures that the provision for health care is very good. Students' individual health and intimate care needs are documented and safely managed. The staff are particularly good at meeting complex health care needs and ensure that health procedures have been written by appropriate health professionals. For example the students own doctor. Information is complex but there are good procedures to keep staff informed about regular changes for individual students.

The students are very involved in the choice of food that they receive and menus reflect a healthy, varied and nutritious diet. Individual needs are very well catered for and sensitively handled so that no young person is singled out as being different. Staff know that where students have particular needs with their eating and drinking, there is an eating and drinking programme setting out how support should be given. These programmes are developed by speech and language therapists and guide the staff very well. As a result mealtimes for all students are relaxed, well ordered and students needs are met very well.

The school has policies and procedures in place on the administration and storage of medication, which the staff know well. The school uses homely remedies which have been agreed with a doctor, and all prescribed medicines are only accepted into the school where the prescription instructions are clear. As a consequence the staff can be sure that the correct dose is always given. Students' welfare is further promoted through staff training in a number of health related areas including first aid and epilepsy.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Students are pleased with how their privacy and dignity is respected, and it is clear that the staff help them to respect each other's privacy also. Students have exceptional relationships with the staff and at all times feel able to approach them with concerns that they have. Therefore issues are resolved before they become complaints. Students are very confident that their views and concerns are taken very seriously, and they know about the complaints procedure and how to contact Ofsted as do their parents and carers. Issues about the running of the school are raised either by individual students or through the student council and it is clear that all students have their voice heard.

The students are clear about the school's stance on bullying and know that the responses of staff will be prompt and consistently applied. The students feel safe in the school and think that the staff are good at ensuring their safety in all aspects of their care. There are clear procedures for responding to safeguarding concerns in the school. Staff are knowledgeable about what they need to do should there be a concern or issue. They are also very aware of how vulnerable disabled children are.

There are procedures for the vetting of staff and visitors to the school including CRB (Criminal Record Bureau) checks at enhanced level, and references prior to employment. Proof of identification is also checked but not recorded on the staff file in line with the National Minimum Standards. It is the policy of the provider that governors do not have to have a CRB check prior to their involvement in the residential care. Up to now the Head has been able to ensure the students' safety by ensuring that existing CRB checks have been used. Whilst this has ensured the safety and welfare to date, this has the potential to put students at risk in the future as new governors are appointed.

Students demonstrate exceptionally good behaviour in the school. The staff are very clear about their approach to the students, which is positive, nurturing and based on individual reward and achievement. The staff, managers and parents are happy that there is no need for sanctions and physical intervention in the school. The Head and Head of Care are very clear that if this were necessary, staff would receive the relevant training and the National Minimum Standards would be met with regard to recording.

The building provides a homely environment for students to enjoy their residential accommodation. The students' health and safety is protected because the school has made clear and robust arrangements for regularly checking aspects of safety around the building. These systems include a very clear process for risk assessment, checks on gas, electricity and portable appliance testing. Fire safety has a very high priority and all who use the building practise evacuation regularly in different circumstances and times of the day. As a result all are clear about what they should do in the event of a fire. Recent alterations to the reception area have improved the security for the residential facilities.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The students' educational achievement has a high priority and the residential stays actively encourage them to develop and benefit. Very effective communication between classroom staff, residential staff and parents promotes consistency for students. Residential staff are very clear about educational targets and see the residential provision as another way to help students to develop, but in a way that is more relaxed and informal than the school day.

The staff know the students well and have developed very good relationships with them. Therefore students are confident that there is always a staff member on duty that they can talk to about their problems. They say that staff are 'brilliant' at supporting them and know their individual needs well. The staff ratio allows for quality time to be spent with students and it is clear that staff make time for individuals if they need support. The staff follow clear care planning documents which set out how each students needs should be met.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

There are extremely good working partnership between parents and the school. This helps to promote the students' welfare as they get consistent messages from both home and school.

Staff are proactive in ensuring students feel able to express their views and wishes during their stay. Students are clearly used to a culture where showing an opinion about their daily life in the school is seen as very positive. There is a school council which is extremely well managed and used effectively to evaluate boarding provision. Whatever communication individuals use, the views of all students are established so that each student has a 'voice'. The Head, Head of Care and Deputy Head of Care all ensure that the views and wishes of the students are responded to effectively and relevant changes to boarding provision have been made as a result.

The school actively involves parents in the life of the school through regular contact with them, and the parents and carers are pleased with the way that they can be involved in the decisions made about residential provision. Staff are good at helping students to contact with parents carers and other family members during residential stays and always allow students to do this whenever they request.

The staff are familiar with care plans which are available for each student. These documents set out the needs of the students and how they should be met. The care plans include arrangements to ensure that the students can practise their independence skills. Appropriate and individual arrangements are made for students who are new to residential accommodation and staff are sensitive to their needs. For students who are due to move on from the school, this is also dealt with sensitively and individuals receive the relevant support

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The building meets the National Minimum Standards and is well suited to needs of the students who use it. The lounge and computer room provide a homely area for sitting, playing games and watching television. Some students raise issues about space in the corridor and in some of the bedrooms which are smaller. They say that space in the smaller rooms can at times be tight

especially if there are two beds in situ. Some wheelchairs are stored in the corridor in case there is a fire and they are needed quickly. However this means that there is little space in the corridor for two students using wheelchairs to pass each other. The students did report however that there is no safety issues connected to either of the issues above. Parents and staff also feel that this does not present any safety issues.

There has been extensive improvements to the bathrooms with the relevant equipment installed to ensure that the needs of the students can be met. The reception area has also been improved and is easier for the students to access but also provides additional security to the building in the form of security cameras and buzzer near the door.

While the students are in residence, they also have access to other facilities in the school. For example the hall, sensory room and hydrotherapy pool.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

There are very effective systems in place to monitor the quality of the residential provision and daily lives of students in residence. The students, parents, carers, staff, governors and management of the school are all actively involved in this process.

Each student is seen by staff as an individual and the promotion of equality and diversity in the school is good. Staff are clear that the progress of individuals should be celebrated and that the needs of all students have a very high priority.

The school's staffing policy ensures that the high level of staffing is consistently maintained and meets every students' needs very well. There is good continuity of staff so that students' relationships with them are not disrupted. The staff are well trained, well supported and highly motivated by their work with the students and clearly enjoy their job. They are very knowledgeable about the students, their needs and what needs to be done to ensure that all aspects of these are met. As a consequence, the students receive a good quality of care and have all their needs very well met by competent staff.

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 that the system for recruiting staff and volunteers to the school, includes all elements of the Standard. This is in particular relation to CRB checks for governors (NMS 27.2)

- ensure that the proof of identity for staff is verifiable in records kept at the school (NMS 27.2).