

# Charlton School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Margaret Lynes
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<b>Head / Principal</b>	Mr Dale-Emberton
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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**

The school is situated in Charlton in London, close to all main services. The boarding unit is sited within the main school, offering a small, comfortable home for eight pupils, with additional garden and play areas. In the evening the children have the use of some of the school facilities, such as the swimming pool, library and the information technology suite, as well as going out into the community to visit the cinema, youth clubs and other local activities.

### **Summary**

This was an announced inspection at which all key standards were inspected. This is an outstanding school where outcomes for the children are excellent. It demonstrates individualised care and support that reflects each child's needs. The children are integral to decision making and there is ample evidence to show how their views are considered. Diversity and equality are promoted effectively in all aspects of the service. There is a history of compliance in most areas and where shortfalls have been identified immediate action is taken to meet any recommendations.

This inspection has resulted in two recommendations. One relates to staff recruitment and the need for recruitment files to evidence that all appropriate vetting checks have been carried out. The second recommendation relates to staff supervision and the need for it to be held every half term.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

The last inspection had resulted in three recommendations. These related to the need for the unit to ensure that all agency staff had been appropriately vetted; to review bathing facilities in the unit and consider installing a bath so as to give the young people a choice; and to recruit an additional member to the care staff team so that there is an allocated key worker to each bedroom. On this inspection the agency staff files were complete. A new spa bath has been installed adjacent to the sensory garden. Staff will assess if this provides an adequate choice or whether they still need to install a bath actually within the unit. Additional staff from the educational establishment are now allocated to also work in the boarding unit, thus providing an adequate number of staff. The independent listener has also moved posts and has taken on a carer role. The recommendations have, therefore, been actioned.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

The children live in a healthy environment where their individual health and care needs are identified and promoted. Each child has a clear health plan, which is kept regularly updated. Staff showed a good understanding of the specific care and treatment each child requires and where specialist procedures are needed they are appropriately trained to carry them out. Qualified nurses are on duty in the school during the day and there is always one nurse on duty in the home from when the children return from school until the following morning when they go back.

The children are given medication as prescribed. A lot of work has been done since the last inspection to tighten up the recording of medication both given, prescribed and brought into the unit. The improvement is noticeable.

A written record is kept of all significant illnesses, accidents or injuries to the children whilst they are at the school. There is good liaison between care staff, parents and educational staff to try to ensure that all relevant information is appropriately shared. The children are provided with information commensurate to their level of understanding on how to promote their own well-being.

Children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. They are consulted as to menu content and no child is presumed to be unable to give an opinion, regardless of whether they take their nutrition orally or via a feed. Mealtimes are a social occasion, with every child involved. If they are not eating, they are sat near the table so that they can be included. The young people commented that the meals are lovely. The dining room is large with one extensive table so that all staff and children can take meals together. Where needed, specialist crockery, cutlery and other equipment is provided.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled. Staff respect each child's wishes for privacy so far as it is consistent with good parenting and the need to protect the child. All of the children require intimate care and staff have received appropriate training in this area. They are provided with written guidelines which they follow in practice.

An appropriate complaints procedure is in place and made known to parents and the children. A complaints log is maintained. Two complaints have been made since the last inspection. One related to an incident in the school and was referred back to the school to deal with. The other came from a parent who was concerned about the type of care being provided. This was well handled by the head of care who invited the parent into the school to show care staff how she cared for her child.

The welfare of the children is promoted and they are protected from abuse. The school has a designated safeguarding lead, who is able to meet regularly with colleagues from other agencies concerned with safeguarding. This individual ensures that all boarding staff have an annual child protection update. They have recently produced a new, easy to follow flow chart and step by step guide showing staff the action they should take if they have a safeguarding concern. Staff can access the safeguarding lead at any time if they have concerns or queries. There have not been any safeguarding issues since the last inspection.

Children are as protected as possible from bullying. The school has and follows, an anti bullying policy which staff and children are familiar with and is effective in practice. A bullying risk assessment is in place. There have not been any recorded incidents of bullying in the boarding unit.

The school has systems in place for staff in the boarding unit to follow in the event a child absconds. There have not been any unauthorised absences from the boarding school.

The children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour. Staff were seen to actively encourage and praise acceptable behaviour and respond with constructive criticism to inappropriate behaviour. Sanctions are rarely imposed, just one since the last inspection. The recording of this sanction did not clearly evidence the outcome of the sanction; however, in all other respects it was well recorded. There was just one restraint since the last inspection. This involved a member of staff blocking a doorway so that a child could not exit and put themselves at risk of harm.

The children live in a school that provides physical safety and security. Access to the boarding unit is restricted and all visitors have to sign in. Appropriate maintenance is carried out on the fire detection system, portable electrical appliances and the specialist equipment such as the hoists. Fire alarms are tested weekly and regular fire drills are carried out. Hot water temperatures are recorded weekly and all were within the acceptable range. Risk assessments are in place regarding the unit itself, for each individual child and also for all off site activities. These are updated on a regular basis.

There is careful selection of staff who work in the boarding unit. The four care staff have been in post for some time, as has the head of care. The school is experiencing some difficulties in recruiting permanent nursing staff and so at present relies on agency cover. Fortunately, the staff provided have been consistent. Their recruitment files were examined and found to be in order. A small number of education staff also assist in the unit. Two of their files were examined. They contained the required information with one exception, as one file only contained one reference. The head confirmed that two had been sought, but one had apparently gone astray. The head also confirmed that at interview applicants are asked about their previous work history and state why they have left any previous employment with children.

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

The provision is good.

The school's residential provision actively supports the children's educational progress. Liaison between care and educational staff has improved since the last inspection, with care staff commenting that they now felt much more involved. They are enabled to go into lessons to observe and there is a handover at the end of each school day between both staff groups. Programmes that are being worked on in the unit are now carried on during the school day and vice versa. Both teaching and care staff assist the children to improve their independent living skills. School staff have access to a managed learning environment, an internet based site that enables information to be shared about each individual child, the boarding unit and the school as a whole. Appropriate restrictions are in place to ensure confidential information is not inappropriately accessed. The system allows care staff to instantly access relevant information on the boarders and also to post information themselves. The system is new to staff and it has yet to be fully embraced.

The children receive individual support when they need it. Staff actively promote the involvement of all the boarders in social groups and to positively interact with each other. The school did have independent listener but that incumbent has now moved to take a care staff position in the boarding unit. The listener role is now undertaken by the school counsellor. The children can contact any member of staff with a personal problem. It was clear that they all knew the staff well and were comfortable in approaching them all.

## Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run. Ofsted questionnaires were received back from most of the boarders. No issues of concern were raised and all expressed their happiness at being in the unit. Comments such as, 'I like the school because the staff are nice to me and they take me out' and 'they care for me and look after me' were received.

The weekly house meeting was observed. It was well planned with a lot of stimuli for the children. All of the children, regardless of whether or not they had verbal skills were asked for their input throughout the meeting. Staff clearly have a good understanding of the various methods of communication used and were able to interpret the smallest signs made by the children. No child was assumed to be unable to communicate. There is a school council and one of the boarder's is the unit's representative on it.

A small number of questionnaires were also received from parents. These were all very positive. Comments such as: 'very caring staff'; 'reliable'; 'concerns are acknowledged and quickly acted upon'; 'the school looks after my son very well, they really care for him and I am completely happy knowing my son is happy' and 'staff show great kindness and sympathy when needed' were received. All said that they could not think of anything the boarding unit could do to improve.

The children have their needs assessed and written plans were available for inspection. They contained comprehensive documentation including personal care needs; medication; targets (in pictures & symbols); a care plan assessment; feeding regimes and emergency protocols; parental permission; daily dairy sheets; a learning plan and a risk assessment. Progress is charted, often through photographs to enable the children to better understand the progress they have made.

New children are introduced to the unit in the way that is most appropriate for them. As an example, during the inspection, educational staff planned to escort a new boarder to the boarding house to help them settle in and care staff would go to school with the child in the morning. Admissions showed good forethought, insight and planning. Care staff try to have as much input as they can when children leave. Wherever possible, they will visit a child in their new placement and invite staff from prospective placements to visit the child at the school. A digital profile is prepared for each child so that when they move on the staff at their new placement, or their family or carers have an up to date permanent and visual record which shows, for example, the child's likes and dislikes and their moving and handling needs.

In accordance with their wishes the children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents. As all the children go home every weekend, the school does not generally experience the homesickness problems often associated with boarding schools. Staff keep in close contact with parents, and parents will soon have access to the website so they can see their child's 'page' and keep up to date with what is happening both in the school and the boarding unit.

## Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The children live in well designed and pleasant premises. All bedrooms are twin and fitted to suit children with multiple disabilities. The children can accessorise their rooms to suit their own personal taste. All bedrooms are ensuite and bathrooms are also fitted with appropriate disability aids. There is a large dining room and a pleasant conservatory. Recently finished is a delightful sensory garden that can be accessed by all the children. Adjacent to the garden is a spa bath which is due to be opened just after the end of this inspection.

Effective precautions are in place to ensure that the boarding unit is secure from unauthorised access. Positive links are maintained with the local community and the children frequently access community based leisure facilities.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Children have equal access to a range of activities including outings and school clubs. It is clear that every effort is made to meet a wide varied of needs and ability. No child is assumed to be less able to make a choice or have some form of input. The unit is fitted with a variety of aids and adaptations to give equal access to facilities and resources to all children. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place relating to diversity and equality.

Parents, staff and the placing authority have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles which is set out in a boarding unit handbook. This includes all of the issues in the national minimum standards except for admission criteria which can be found in the school prospectus. Rather than produce a generic handbook for children, information about the boarding unit and what it is like to board is provided on an individual basis at the level that each child can comprehend. Additional information about the unit is posted on the school's website.

The children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently. There has been no change in the care team since the last inspection. Staffing levels are satisfactory and supplemented by a select number of educational staff.

The children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs. Training is normally carried out on inset days and both staff and the head of care felt this was sufficient. Each member of staff receives supervision termly. This is below the frequency suggested in the standards. All staff are supervised including ancillary and catering staff. Appraisals are carried out annually.

The children are looked after by competent staff. There are only four permanent care staff and all have either completed a National Vocational Award (NVQ) at Level 3, are currently undergoing the course, or are waiting for results. The head of care has an NVQ at Level 4. Staff have access to policies and procedures relating to practice across the whole school and they are also provided with ones specific to boarding.

A senior member of staff acts as a link between education and boarding. This provides stability for care staff in their interaction with the school. Part of this role encompasses quality monitoring. Depending on the area, performance checks are carried out weekly, half termly, termly and annually. A report on the operation of the boarding unit is produced every half term, whilst the board of governors receives a termly report.

The boarding unit is visited half termly by a representative from the board of governors and a report produced. These were available for inspection and those examined were positive.

## 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 staff recruitment records evidence that all appropriate vetting checks have been carried out (NMS 27)
- ensure staff receive supervision every half term. (NMS 30)