

Walworth School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

Unique reference number	SC040510
Inspection date	28/09/2010
Inspector	Dennis Bradley
Type of inspection	Key

Setting address	Walworth School, Bluebell Way, NEWTON AYCLIFFE, County Durham, DL5 7LP
Telephone number	01325 300194
Email	
Registered person	Durham County Council
Head/ Principal	Peter Wallbanks
Nominated person	David Ford
Date of last inspection	23/11/2009

© Crown copyright 2010

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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

Walworth School provides education and residential care for children of primary and junior school age, who have a statement of special educational needs. The school is located in a residential area on the outskirts of Newton Aycliffe and is easily accessed by road. Acorn House, the school's residential building, is located behind the main school and comprises four residential units, each having its own living and sleeping areas. The number of residential pupils residing at the school may vary during the school week, with some children residing for up to four nights per week. However, the maximum number of children that may reside at the school is 18.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

At this full announced inspection all the key national minimum standards were inspected. The inspection also looked at the progress the service has made with the recommendations made at the last inspection. These related to the school's policies, procedures and records, and the arrangements for carrying out fire drills and for monitoring the service.

The quality of the boarding provision is good and has some outstanding features. However, there are shortfalls in the school's medication and child protection procedures. There was evidence of very positive relationships between the staff and pupils. Staff are good at promoting healthy eating and monitoring and meeting the nutritional and health care needs of pupils. The school provides a safe, secure and consistent setting for pupils. Staff are good at consulting pupils and involving them in decisions about the school and the residential unit. Staff excel at supporting the education and achievement of the pupils and they encourage and support them to participate in a good range of activities and outings. The opportunities for staff to take part in relevant training are satisfactory and staffing levels are good. There are good arrangements for providing staff with appropriate support and guidance, and for making sure the school is run efficiently.

Improvements since the last inspection

The school has taken action to address the recommendations made at the last inspection. Staff keep appropriate records of sanctions and of medication given to pupils. Fire drills are carried out in accordance with advice received from the local fire authority. Staff are reviewing the school's policies and procedures to ensure they are up to date and the arrangements for monitoring the school's records have improved.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Pupils benefit from being cared for by staff who actively promote their health and well-being. Staff are good at monitoring and meeting the diverse health care needs of pupils. They are also good at communicating with parents and carers, to support the health and well-being of pupils. The school promotes healthy eating and pupils have appropriate opportunities to gain experience in the preparation and cooking of meals. Staff encourage and support pupils to take part in healthy activities, such as cycling and swimming.

There are appropriate arrangements for storing, administering and monitoring pupils' medication. These help to protect their health and meet their health care needs. There are records and procedures covering the administration of medicines for this purpose. However, the residential unit's medication policy is not robust enough. For example, it does not clearly specify what written records staff should keep of the medication given to pupils. Most of the staff have had relevant training and staffing arrangements ensure appropriate support is available for pupils at all times. For example, there is always someone on duty who is trained in first aid should a pupil have an accident.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff are good at respecting the privacy of pupils and they try hard to make sure that pupils understand the importance of respecting each other's privacy. Staff make sure information about pupils and their families is handled confidentially. There are policies and procedures in place to help ensure that this happens.

There are procedures for managing complaints appropriately and ensuring pupils and their families are listened to. Staff make sure that pupils and their families are aware of who they can go to if they have any complaints or concerns. There have been no complaints since the last inspection. Pupils said they could talk to staff if they had any worries or concerns.

The school has clear procedures for safeguarding pupils but they do not include all the recommended elements. All of the staff have had appropriate training on how to protect young people from abuse and respond appropriately to any allegation or suspicion of abuse.

Staff create an atmosphere where bullying is known to be unacceptable. Pupils said they feel safe when at school. There is a clear anti-bullying policy and there is information about bullying and what to do about it, on display throughout the school. Staff feel that staffing levels help to make sure that any bullying behaviour is dealt with promptly. Pupils said that when staff are aware of bullying taking place they deal with it. Most of the staff who work in the residential unit have received training

covering how to counter bullying.

There have been no incidents involving a pupil leaving the residential unit without permission since the last inspection. Only staff can open the external doors of the unit. There are appropriate procedures for when a pupil goes missing.

Staff are very good at encouraging and supporting pupils to develop and maintain socially acceptable behaviour. They give positive messages to pupils to reinforce acceptable behaviour and there is a system of rewards for good behaviour and achievement. All of the pupils have an individual behaviour management plan. There are good arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the use of sanctions and physical interventions by staff. Staff working in the residential unit seldom use physical intervention on pupils and when they use sanctions these are relevant and reasonable. There are clear procedures and guidance for staff, regarding how they should manage the behaviour of pupils. All of the staff have had relevant training and this covers how to reduce or avoid the need to use physical intervention.

There are good systems in place to keep pupils and adults safe from the risk of fire and other potential hazards. For example, staff and pupils take part in regular fire drills. There are regular checks of equipment, such as fire alarms and electrical appliances. Staff carry out a range of risk assessments regarding the premises, activities and outings, as well as individual risk assessments for each pupil.

Pupils benefit from the school having a much more robust system for making sure it only employs suitable people. The school completes a range of checks on new staff, including a Criminal Records Bureau disclosure check. There are good arrangements for monitoring and managing visitors to the school and these help ensure they do not have inappropriate access to pupils.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The residential care staff are exceptionally good at supporting and promoting the education and achievement of pupils. For example, they ensure pupils attend school punctually and they work closely with classroom staff to support pupils' achievement. The residential care staff have a good understanding of pupils' individual educational needs and there are excellent links between the residential provision and the day school. Pupils' plans of care include specific targets, as part of their 24-hour curriculum. Pupils benefit from having the opportunity to take part in a range of activities within the school and the community.

Pupils benefit from having support plans and risk assessments based on their individually assessed needs. Staffing levels provide good opportunities for staff to give pupils support and assistance, to meet their individual needs and wishes. For example, staff regularly read stories to some of the younger pupils at bedtime.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The school is good at consulting pupils and their families. Pupils are actively encouraged and supported to develop skills in daily living. Staff also support pupils to have their say about their day-to-day lives on the residential unit and how the school is run. Staff take pupils' views and opinions seriously and where possible and appropriate, act upon them. The school consults parents about how best to introduce their child to overnight stays on the residential unit. Staff arrange admissions to the residential unit to meet the individual needs of each pupil.

Pupils benefit from having plans of care that set out how the school will meet their assessed needs. There are good arrangements for reviewing the care and progress made by pupils. The school supports parents to attend meetings concerning their child, by providing transport if necessary. There is good communication between staff and pupils' families. For example, staff regularly telephone parents, to keep them up to date regarding their child's progress. This also helps staff keep up to date about any changes needed, regarding the care and support of each pupil. The school has recently appointed a family support worker to build on the support it already provides to pupils' families.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The residential unit provides appropriate accommodation for the pupils. It is pleasantly decorated and is furnished and equipped to a good standard. Each pupil has their own bedroom and there is a good range of communal areas for their use.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The school provides pupils with an individual service designed to meet their assessed needs and preferences. Staff have a good knowledge of the pupils and try to make sure their needs are being met at all times. There is a commitment to improving equality and diversity in practice.

Pupils and their families have access to clear information about the school and the residential unit. Staffing levels are good and sufficient staff are on duty to meet the individual needs and wishes of pupils. The residential unit uses a small number of school staff to cover staff absences. This helps maintain continuity of staffing and reduce potential disruption to the young people.

Staff feel well supported and the school's management team provides good informal support to staff. There are also appropriate arrangements for providing staff with formal supervision and guidance in safeguarding and promoting pupils' welfare.

The residential care staff are experienced and knowledgeable and they have appropriate opportunities for taking part in relevant training. There is a rolling programme of core training, such as child protection and first aid. The majority of staff have a relevant qualification that confirms they have the competencies needed to care for children and young people.

There are good arrangements for monitoring the school and the residential service to identify and address any issues requiring action. This helps make sure pupils and staff benefit from a school that is efficiently run. For example, a representative of the local authority carries out unannounced monitoring visits and completes detailed reports on the conduct of the school.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Compliance with national minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- ensure that there is a suitable policy and written guidance for administering and storing medication and an appropriate written protocol on the provision of non-prescription medicines to children (NMS 14.17 and 14.18)
- ensure the school's procedures for responding to allegations or suspicions of abuse to a child include all the requirements set out at Appendix 1 of the national minimum standards. (NMS 5.4)