

# Ash Field School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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<b>Inspection date</b>	19/01/2011
<b>Inspector</b>	Martha Nethaway
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Key

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<b>Head/ Principal</b>	Jane Booth
<b>Nominated person</b>	Jane Booth
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	26/01/2010

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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 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

This 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

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was a full announced inspection that concentrated on the key national minimum standards. The overall judgement in this report is based on the standards inspected within the relevant Every Child Matters outcome groups.

The overall quality rating for this setting is outstanding. The school's ethos is one of encouraging and responding to the marvellous spirit and commitment of boarders. Staff are required to be energetic, committed, flexible, diligent and fun-loving who share the love of learning. This is summed up by the headteacher, 'The school celebrates how far forward we move, not always how high we jump.'

There are no recommendations being set as a result of this inspection visit.

### Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the school was set five recommendations and all of these have been fully addressed. These areas were related to healthcare, completing the actions of a fire risk assessment, staff supervision and that all records are dated and signed by staff.

The two recommendations related to being healthy have been implemented. This is because the school has improved the quality of the healthcare planning document and also have obtained written permission for the administration of first aid. The school has addressed the previous fire risk assessment by completing a new fire risk assessment and has taken the corrective actions to address the shortfalls. The management team in the boarding provision now ensures that supervision is taking

place for all staff in line with the school's stated policy. The school now ensures that all records are correctly signed and dated in the boarders' files.

The school has demonstrated, by addressing all of these recommendations, its strong commitment to promoting the welfare of boarders at all times.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders enjoy outstanding physical, emotional, and mental health support. They lead healthy lifestyles and learn about positive health choices. Boarders are helped because the school has integrated education, specialist therapies and care for a wide range of abilities. One staff member commented, 'Staff respond to the needs and wishes of individual children regarding their personal and healthcare needs including children with communication needs.'

Boarders live in a healthy environment, staff identify and promote the health and intimate care needs of each boarder. All boarders have health information from parents and carers which is incorporated into the healthcare plans. This includes updated information about epilepsy. Boarders are able to receive first aid and healthcare that is consistent with their needs and circumstances. The nursing team effectively manages and oversees all areas relating to medical treatment and medication. The school has a medication policy, procedure and practice guidance which specifically addresses the use of non-prescribed medication. These are included in the guidance provided for staff. Staff have been trained in the administration of medication.

In addition, the healthcare trust has appointed therapists, such as a physiotherapist, a speech and language therapist and an occupational therapist to work in the school with individuals and groups of pupils. Some clinics are held at the school, such as a visiting paediatrician. The school's therapy manager coordinates all key areas related to health and offers direct support to the residential wing of the school.

During the boarders' residential stays they regularly participate in extra-curricular activities including sports club and dance club. This means they are keeping fit and having regular exercise.

The standard of catering at the school is good. Boarders benefit from a good quality catering provision which supplies nutritious, well-balanced and varied meals. The meals are well presented and mealtimes are pleasant, sociable affairs. The dining area is adequate to meet the needs of boarders during the morning and evening meals. Staff are specifically trained to support boarders who have physical difficulties with eating, drinking or swallowing. Many of the boarders have drinking and eating plans in place which specifically address the environment, utensils and the specific techniques that best support the boarder to eat and drink successfully.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The system in place to promote the safety and welfare of boarders is outstanding. The school has in place effective policies and procedures that promote excellent quality care and support. These directly address areas related to staff recruitment, counteracting bullying, unauthorised absence, complaints, behaviour management and health and safety. Staff offer an energetic approach so that boarders are supported to maximise their opportunities. One staff member explained, 'One of the main aims of the residential wing is to continue the work done during the school day in developing independence, and intellectual, emotional, spiritual and, to the greatest extent possible, physical skills.'

All staff working at the school are committed to safeguarding and the promotion of the welfare of boarders. All staff are provided with annual child protection and safeguarding training. All boarders know who they can talk to and this includes the designated lead for child protection at the school. They are encouraged to keep themselves safe because staff provide a positive atmosphere where boarders feel secure and are encouraged to talk and are listened to. This means that boarders know who they can go to for help.

The school aims to achieve the highest professional standards and the staff have access to a clear code of conduct. All staff are expected to abide by it. This means that the well-being of boarders is at the centre of their professional practice. Boarders understand that they are entitled to respect and privacy. Staff provide care and support that is sensitive to the needs of the individual. Staff have the knowledge and skills to deal sensitively with the various circumstances in which the boarders' privacy and dignity may be infringed.

Boarders are provided with clear information about the complaints process. So far boarders have not made any complaints. There are many examples of compliments about the outstanding boarding provision. One young person commented, 'Thank you for all you have done over the past years. I will miss you all very much especially my late nights.' One parent commented on behalf of their child, 'Thank you for all that you have done over the years'.

Boarders are protected from bullying by others. This is because of the positive ethos of the school where bullying is not acceptable. Everyone is expected to play their part in the prevention and stopping of bullying. Staff are provided with clear guidance and procedures. Staff are alert and vigilant to the risk of bullying. One boarder commented, 'Everyone treats each other with respect.' Recently boarders have participated in the 'Taking action together poster competition' which was part of the school's anti-bullying week.

Boarders are provided with high levels of supervision and support. This means that their whereabouts are always known to staff. There are no occasions when boarders go missing.

Boarders are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour. Boarders learn about how the school expects high standards of behaviour at all times. Staff are excellent at providing praise for appropriate behaviours from boarders. Boarders benefit because of staff encouragement to make pupils aware of the social norms within a very supportive environment. There are no times that staff have had to use physical intervention or sanctions.

Boarders live in a school that provides physical safety and security. Staff have a really good understanding of their responsibilities which are subject to a range of health and safety legislation. The school has comprehensive policies, procedures and safe systems of work. All equipment is maintained in good condition. All of the domestic installations are serviced in line with the school's stated policies. Staff ensure risk assessments are completed and reviewed as circumstances change. This ensures that boarders are kept safe and avoid harm. In addition, boarders participate in fire drills so that they know and are aware of the actions to take in the event of an emergency.

There is careful selection and vetting of all staff, volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent boarders being exposed to risk.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders benefit from high levels of individual support provided by residential staff, health professionals and academic staff. Boarders are provided with a wide range of support and opportunities that encourages them to achieve educationally and socially so that they can reach their fullest potential. Boarders are clear about which members of staff they can go to for personal support and the school has clear guidance for staff and boarders about how support is provided. The school's residential provision actively supports boarders' educational progress at the school. Boarders receive individual support when they need it.

The educational programme in the residential wing includes the opportunity to enhance curriculum activities and for boarders to have a chance to do homework. Boarders get the most out of life and enjoy recreation. Boarders are encouraged to positively use their free time through extra-curricular activities. There is a lively programme of activities aimed at developing the constructive use of leisure time. For example, boarders are encouraged to participate in swimming, sport, visits to the cinema, library, concerts, fairs and in summer, outings to various parks. The recreational activities and programmes are a well thought through approach and this includes externally appointed youth workers and sports coaches. There is also a dance tutor.

The school welcomes and celebrates the diversity of its boarders. Boarders benefit from the school's commitment to equality of opportunity. The school supports the

diversity of all its boarders and provides individualised support for those who may require additional academic or personal support. Many boarders highlighted and valued the help they receive from the curriculum assistants.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

The school ensures the views of boarders are the focus of the school's activity. Boarders are able to use informal and formal consultation processes so that their views are listened to and obtained. Firstly, the school provides an 'open door' policy both within the residential provision and by the headteacher. The school has an active residential student council. Some of the changes that have taken place include introducing a 'suggestion box' in the residential provision. The student council has made an outstanding contribution towards fundraising and competitions which were events organised by students. In addition, the school regularly uses student interviews and questionnaires which provides valuable feedback about the quality of the boarding provision.

The school has systems in place to help new boarders settle in to the school and adjust to boarding life. New boarders benefit from both written information setting out the school's procedures and the support from staff. This results in new boarders feeling well informed and warmly welcomed.

All boarders have their needs assessed effectively and a straightforward written care plan outlines how their needs will be met. These are accessible every time the boarder is using the residential wing for overnight stays. This is then combined with the school's comprehensive 'case study' which is an integrated document that covers the 24 hour curriculum. This means that staff are working towards the same broad range of programmes across education and care.

All boarders are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and carers. They have access to a convenient payphone which can be used independently. The school allows boarders to take their mobile phones and this means that parents and carers can contact their child when it is convenient for them.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Boarding accommodation is comfortable, clean, reasonably furnished, well maintained and provides access for disabled boarders. Good systems are in place to ensure that boarders' possessions are kept safe. Some boarders would like more space but the school does make good use of the available environment. Bedroom accommodation is a combination of an individual room and a shared room, using profile beds which means that the individual can position themselves very comfortably, with some storage space nearby. Boarders are able to personalise some space around their rooms with personal items which makes the accommodation feel

more homely. The school has just completed a renovation programme for the bathroom and shower areas and plans are in place to improve the standard of accommodation on offer to boarders. The school has a new building programme for the residential accommodation and this will enhance the environment further.

## Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The leadership and management at the boarding provision is outstanding. This style of management ensures that staff are clear about their tasks and responsibilities and that boarders feel that the school is run with their welfare as its primary concern. One member of staff commented, 'The headteacher provides an environment which maximises a culture of choice and control for boarders.' The headteacher is fully involved in the day-to-day management and provides strong leadership and support. As a result, the boarding provision has a high profile in the school with clear lines of accountability, communication and a progressive management structure. This means that boarders are accessing appropriately high-quality care and support to maximise their potential. The school meets its aim to develop independence and social skills in all boarders. This is because of the school's openness and involvement of parents and carers to promote good practice.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school employs a diverse range of staff across the school and is able to support parents and boarders by offering communication in different languages and showing an awareness and sensitivity of other cultures. One member of staff commented, 'Pupils give presentations to a number of different groups around 'What Disability Means To Me.'

Parents, carers and boarders receive suitable information about the school and this includes a prospectus which is user-friendly. This ensures that all parties know what the school can offer in terms of the purpose and aims of the boarding provision.

Staffing arrangements at the residential boarding wing are good. There are more than enough staff available for boarders. There is a dedicated small core group of residential staff and this is then supplemented with a number of curriculum assistants who specifically work both in the school and residential provision. This means that the philosophy and ethos of the school and boarding are shared, which produces a positive environment for boarders. All staff are fully trained with the majority achieving National Vocational Qualification at level 3 and some staff are qualified to university degree level. The school provides a programme of progressive training courses so that staff continue their professional development. For example, the school is a centre for communication technology.

The systems to monitor and review the performance of the school are highly effective. The headteacher completes internal audits and gathers comprehensive information which demonstrates how effective operational policies are in practice. The quality assurance system is effective because it analyses the quality of care and focuses on the management of the boarding provision.

