

# Charlton School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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**Inspector** Seka Graovac

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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.<sup>1,2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

This is a residential special school that is maintained by the Royal London Borough of Greenwich. It provides 180 places for students aged 11 to 19 who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. It also provides eight residential places, some of which might be on a shared basis. There are currently 168 students on roll, nine of whom use the residential service.

The residential unit is situated in the main school. There are four double bedrooms with bathrooms en-suite. The residential service is available during week days and term time only. The minimum criteria for admission to the residential unit are that the students must be members of the school, be physically disabled and/or have learning difficulties. The residential provision was last inspected in June 2010.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boardingschools](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boardingschools).

## Inspection judgements

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

## Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of residential provision at Charlton School is good. There are substantial strengths in the quality of care and support provided to students. The excellent and good practices by far outweigh the very few weaknesses identified at this inspection.
- The residential provision has a very positive impact on the personal development and well-being of students. Within an effective framework of holistic, integrated care, support and education, the unit contributes strongly to enabling students to achieve their full potential and to continue to make outstanding progress in many aspects of their lives.
- Students are safe and have their welfare well-safeguarded and promoted. They have developed trusting and authentically warm relationships with residential and other school staff. The residential environment is free from bullying and any form of intimidation. It is a safe and happy place.
- Students are empowered to express themselves and have their voice heard. They are enabled to make choices and progressively have more influence on their own lives and the school community.
- Students have excellent opportunities to experience a wide range of activities and feel a part of youth culture.
- Residential students and their parents are exceptionally happy with the residential provision. They value the service immensely and in some cases, describe it as a life-saver.
- The residential provision is well organised and managed. The staff team are very

experienced and highly dedicated. There is a continuous drive to provide a better service. The recommendations given by Ofsted previously have been addressed. The school's focus is always on meeting students' needs, enabling them to have more fulfilling lives and enhancing their future prospects.

- The school's commitment towards diversity and equality is outstanding.
- The residential provision at Charlton School meets all national minimum standards for residential special schools. However, Ofsted recommends that some aspects of the provision are reviewed and improved. The areas for improvement include record keeping of medication stocks and fire drills.

## **Outcomes for residential pupils**

The outcomes for residential students at Charlton School are outstanding.

Parents report that their children love being in the residential unit. Parents say that receiving this service has had an enormous positive impact on their children's progress. Parents also appreciate very much the effect it has had on their families. They used words, such as 'godsent' and 'lifeline' to describe what it means for them.

Residential students are very happy to stay in the unit. The unit is a joyful place resounding with banter and happy sounds. After a half-term break, one student said to the inspector: 'I missed the school so much. I could not wait to be back here. I love being here. I love my friends. I love the staff. This is the best place for me. This is where my life is. This is where I am. There is nothing better in the world.'

Residential students are making excellent progress in achieving their full potential in all aspects of their personal development. They very much enjoy the residential experience. It gives them great opportunities to develop friendships and engage in a very broad range of meaningful and fun activities. In accordance with their abilities and needs, they are making great strides in developing communication, social skills and independence. This includes enhanced mobility and greater physical independence. They are successfully engaging in learning. They are making either good or better than expected progress in education. They are achieving their individual learning targets.

Residential students are helped effectively to manage any medical conditions they have and any difficulties associated with those conditions. They learn what they need to keep themselves well and safe. They know how to ask for help from adults when they need it. They enjoy having delicious and healthy food. If they are unable to eat, they receive optimum nutrition.

Residential students participate in an excellent range of sports and physical activities available at the school and in the community. The first holiday organised by the school specifically for the residential students was a great success. Outdoor bicycle

riding was particularly popular.

Residential students' communication skills continue to improve. This contributes to their ability to form and maintain excellent relationships with their peers and adults. They are successfully growing towards or have grown into being fully confident, caring, polite, respectful young people interested in others and the world around them. They are able to express their views and make choices. They feel listened to and have learnt to listen to others. They show care for other children. They are interested in popular culture. They have a good sense of humour. They are willing to engage in meaningful debates on how to contribute to the school and to the wider community. They are able to take effectively different roles and responsibilities, such as to chair meetings or represent their friends' views. They have a good sense of what is right and what is wrong. They are very keen to ensure the equality of opportunity for everyone. They take lead on deciding on the menus, the activities organised by the residential unit and on some aspects of their physical environment.

Students are preparing well for the next stage of their life. An ex residential student and now a young adult who still visits the unit told the inspector: 'I still love coming here. They taught me everything I know.'

## **Quality of residential provision and care**

The quality of residential provision at Charlton School is good.

The residential unit is making a strong contribution towards the residential students' outstanding progress. New residential students are sensitively helped to get used to staying overnight at the unit. When the time is right, they are thoughtfully led through a well-planned transition process to leave the residential unit and the school. Throughout their engagement with the residential service, they receive highly personalised care. This care holistically addresses all their diverse and changing needs. Students, their parents and other adults involved in supporting them contribute effectively to the development of students' comprehensive individual care plans. Those plans are regularly reviewed and updated. Residential students have their say in how they are cared for. They are exceptionally highly satisfied with the care they receive. The unit enables them to have their voice heard and to have their choices respected.

Each residential student has a photo-journal. The journals show how the students progressed in various activities of daily living, gaining more independence. There are also numerous photos showing their participation in a wide range of stimulating and fun activities. The unit regularly celebrates students' birthdays and personal achievements. Parents made very positive comments about the unit parties that they also get invited to. The unit also uses various national and international holidays to raise students' awareness about their own and other cultures and to celebrate diversity. Students enjoyed very much the most recent Chinese New Year celebration.

They were already planning St David's day celebration.

Catering provision is excellent. In addition to enjoying healthy and delicious food, students have formed warm relationships with the cook.

The school has many wonderful resources that children can use. The facilities include a large sensory garden with themed paths and an outdoor sheltered music room, an indoor hydrotherapy pool, a spa, a multi-gym and various art rooms. The school participates in many inclusion events with other schools including mainstream schools to promote Paralympics and exercise. In January 2012, a number of Information and Communication Technology experts from all over Europe and further afield came to see the school's wide range of ICT resources.

The quality of the residential accommodation is excellent. The environment is spacious and beautiful. It is kept very well maintained and spotlessly clean. It is appropriately warm and comfortable and has plenty of natural light. It is decorated and furnished to a very high standard and in a homely way. Bedrooms are carefully and beautifully personalised to reflect students' interests and choices. The whole environment is appropriately designed, fully adapted and equipped to enable effective promotion of mobility and safe handling. The school is a Movement Opportunity Via Education (MOVE) centre of excellence. Residential students receive MOVE support at the school as well as in the residential unit. Consistent and continuous reinforcement of physical movement programmes contributes effectively to improved control of movement and increasing independence that students achieve.

The links between academic and residential staff and other professionals involved in students' care are effective. This means that residential students receive consistent support to enhance their learning.

In addition to its own extensive health care resources, the school works in a highly effective partnership with the local NHS Trust. This ensures that students have access to all the help that is available and proves to have a positive impact on their well-being. Students receive speech and language therapy, physiotherapy, re-bounce therapy, counselling, music therapy and drama therapy.

Good arrangements for residential students to receive nursing care are in place. A registered nurse is always on duty at the residential unit. Each residential student has a detailed written health care plan. Staff support is unobtrusive. It promotes students' well-being and personal hygiene in a dignifying manner. The school keeps clear records of medication administration records. Those records show that students receive medication as prescribed by their doctors and with the written permission obtained from their parents. Medication is very well managed on a day-to-day basis. However, there are some weaknesses in stock control. For example, an historical audit error means the medication records do not fully match the stock count. This has remained undetected by the school's monitoring procedures.

## **Residential pupils' safety**

The safety of residential students at Charlton School is good.

The school provides an environment that is physically safe and emotionally nurturing. Residential students have developed a strong sense of safety. Both they and their parents report having a high level of trust and confidence in residential staff and management.

Excellent relationships between students and staff, suitable staffing levels, staff competence, staff vigilance and caring attitudes make a strong contribution to the effective safeguarding and promotion of students' welfare. Staff receive regular and frequent training in child protection that is delivered by the Local Authority Designated Officer for safeguarding children. This training, together with the other relevant training staff receive also has a positive impact on the safeguarding.

The policies and procedures for protecting children from harm and for safeguarding and promoting their welfare are effective. This includes e-safety. The school's procedures for reporting of safeguarding concerns are clear and well-known to all staff. However, the school is not complacent. It continues to systematically look into different ways to encourage students to express themselves freely, including any concerns they may have. The school's independent listener and governors regularly visit the residential unit. This provides students with the additional opportunities to build trust with more adults and have more people who they may confide in.

Residential students report feeling safe. There have been no safeguarding concerns raised at the residential unit. There have been no incidents of bullying. In contrary, students show a great level of care for one another. The unit provides a supportive and relaxed environment that is free from any form of intimidation and pressure. Students' constructive and safe behaviour is well promoted through positive relationships, encouragement, praise, rewards and targets-led individual plans. Sanctions are very sparingly used and there have been no physical interventions on the residential unit. Behaviour management policy and practice is effective. Residential students have a high standard of behaviour. There have been no incidence of students missing from the residential unit. Students love being in the unit or going out with staff with whom they have formed appropriate attachments.

The environment is appropriately secure, taking into account students' needs and abilities. The access to the school is appropriately managed to ensure that no unauthorised person gains entry. CCTV cameras are used throughout the school. The school is reviewing the use of cameras and sound monitors inside the residential unit to ensure that the right balance of protection and privacy continues to be achieved.

There have been no major accidents. Comprehensive written risk assessments that include premises, outings and activities are in place. Those assessments take into

account the individual students' needs for protection and development. Those documents are regularly reviewed.

The environment is maintained free of hazards. Health and safety arrangements are sound and regular checks are undertaken. Fire safety arrangements are satisfactory. A comprehensive fire risk assessment is in place and is regularly reviewed. The alarms are regularly tested. Students are involved in numerous unplanned and some planned fire drills at the school. However, the residential unit was unable to clearly demonstrate that fire drills are carried out each term in 'residential time'.

## **Leadership and management of the residential provision**

The leadership and management of the residential provision at Charlton School is good.

The school has a strong management and leadership team that is committed to driving the service forward. The head of care, who is responsible for day-to-day management of the residential unit, is appropriately qualified and has an impressive almost 40 years of experience in this field of work. She is very much involved with students and leads by example. The residential staff team is very stable and highly dedicated to provide the best possible support and care. The staff are appropriately trained and either have appropriate qualifications or are working towards obtaining them.

The management and staff across the school are united by the school's clear ethos. Through good team work and working together with external professionals, the school is effective at meeting its aims and objectives. The residential unit is efficiently and well-managed. Record keeping is good and records are securely stored.

The governing body is actively involved in the life of the school. Governors regularly visit the residential unit. The good internal monitoring is supplemented with evaluation provided by external experts. For example, the school has recently commissioned a consultant to report on the value-for-money outcomes of the residential unit.

The school regularly consults with students and their parents to ensure that the school remains flexible and serves them well. Residential students and their parents are highly satisfied with the service. They describe it as 'first class' and '100 percent outstanding'. No complaints have been raised. Parents expressed having full confidence in the school's complaints procedure.

At the last inspection that was carried out in June 2010, Ofsted recommended that the school keeps more comprehensive staff recruitment records and that the frequency of formal staff supervision is increased. The school has addressed both recommendations. Some staff members have received training in safer recruitment.

As no new residential support staff have been recruited, it was not possible to judge fully the extent of the improvement achieved. The school is able to demonstrate that all residential staff receive formal supervision each half-term.

There are many other improvements that the school has achieved since the last inspection. They include: strengthening students' voice through improvements to communications systems, such as the recent introduction of 'talking mats'; further development of the school's council and better partnership with parents including coffee mornings and training offered.

## **National minimum standards**

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

## **What should the school do to improve further?**

- Improve the stock control of medication so that there is a more robust audit trail.
- Review and improve the recording of fire drills to ensure that records are systematically kept to clearly demonstrate drills are undertaken each term in 'residential time'.

**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.**



20/02/2012

Dear residential students,

### **Inspection of Charlton School**

I recently visited you at the residential unit. Thank you very much for welcoming me and being so friendly. You showed me around and shared your experiences with me.

You are doing exceptionally well. You communicate well. You can express what you need. Trusted staff members are always there to help you. You are very kind to other students and adults. You listen to each other. You are interested in other people. You are interested in the world around you. You have a good sense of what is right and what is wrong. Your behaviour is very good. There is no bullying.

You are safe at the unit. You have developed genuinely close relationships with the unit staff. They look after you really well. This includes the nurses who give you your medication. They also make sure that your medical needs are met. You are close with the unit cook. You choose what you would like to eat. He makes it for you. You also choose how you would like to spend your free time. The staff respect your choices as much as possible. They arrange various activities for you. You have excellent opportunities to try new things. You are growing up being part of the usual youth culture.

The unit is a happy place. It is very spacious. It is comfortably furnished and equipped. It has been specially adapted for your needs. It is kept very clean, tidy and safe from any hazards. Your bedrooms are beautifully personalised.

You go to a good school. Teachers, nurses, therapists and many other staff are working together with you and your parents. You have excellent opportunities to learn and develop. You receive good help to achieve you targets and grow in your independence. I have judged the progress you are making as outstanding. Well done!

I have judged the overall residential provision as good. Many parts of it are excellent. Good records are kept. However some can be improved further. I recommend that the school tightens its records of medication and fire drills.

Yours sincerely,

Seka Graovac