

Northfield School

Knights Road, Oxford, OX4 6DQ

Inspection dates 15–16 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires Improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Adequate	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The rate of students' progress in English and mathematics, particularly from their starting points to Year 9, is not yet good because teaching varies too much.
- In some classes in the school and the off-site unit, expectations of what students can achieve are not high enough and adults give them too much help.
- The management of behaviour is inconsistent and at these times students' behaviour has a negative impact on their learning
- The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is adequate. Links with the residence are limited and there are too few examples of students doing homework or school work, such as reading, in the house.
- The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools.
- Governors have not been rigorous enough in monitoring the school and bringing about improvement. Past inadequacies in teaching and leadership have left a legacy of underperformance by some students.
- Procedures for managing the performance of teachers have not been checked closely enough and there has not been enough training, particularly in the management of behaviour.

The school has the following strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning improves from Years 10 to 13.
- The sixth form is good. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good and often outstanding.
- Progress in physical education and art across the school is very good because of excellent teaching.
- Attendance has improved over the past two years.
- School information about students' achievement is effectively managed and tracked, giving a clear view of how well different groups achieve.
- The curriculum has improved and offers some exciting school and off-site activities.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 16 lessons. In addition, the inspectors made a few short visits to observe pupils' learning, observe playtime, look at students' books and listen to some students read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the acting Head of Care, other senior leaders and managers, the Chairman of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and some students.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information about students' progress, planning and monitoring documents, school self-evaluation and safeguarding information for the school and the residence.
- There were too few responses to the online survey (Parent View) to take account of parents' views of the school. Account was taken of 32 responses to the inspection questionnaire from staff.

Inspection team

Denise Morris, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kate Robertson

Additional Inspector

Barbara Davies

Social Care Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average residential special school catering for students from across Oxfordshire who are supported by a statement of special educational needs for their behavioural, emotional and social needs. Most students arrive by taxi.
- A small proportion of students have additional needs, mainly autism spectrum disorders, attention deficit disorder or Asperger's Syndrome.
- There is an off-site unit situated within the residence, catering for seven students with very challenging behaviour, and social and emotional difficulties, who are at risk of permanent exclusion from the main school. .
- The residence is situated a short walk from the main school and caters for up to 12 students. Most of these have homes a long way from the school. It also provides short-term respite for a few other students each week. There is currently no overall Head of Care because the current leader has been absent for several months.
- Most students are White British.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals, those looked after by the local authority and those from service families) is above average.
- The school provides an early-morning club which includes breakfast and a few after-school clubs, all of which are not managed by the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in English and mathematics, particularly by younger pupils up to Year 9 and in the off-site unit, so that the rate of students' progress accelerates by:
 - giving appropriate training to staff in managing students' behaviour so that it is consistent across the school
 - making sure that the work set in lessons is sufficiently challenging to meet each student's individual abilities
 - raising expectations of the amount of work students can achieve and giving them opportunities to work by themselves without adult help
 - developing better links with the residence so that students have more opportunities to read in the evenings and complete homework.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by school leaders and the governing body by monitoring teaching and learning more regularly and making better use of the systems to manage the performance of all staff.
- The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:
 - consolidate the record keeping system and make sure that the full names of staff are recorded, not just initials, and that entries are tamper proof.
 - make sure that children's files contain details of any restraint, sanction and medication administered alongside the central records that are kept.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students up to Year 9 do not make enough progress from their starting points. Their progress in reading, writing and mathematics is too slow. Students do not do enough reading to improve their skills and in many lessons too much is done for them so that they do not achieve enough for themselves.
- In a Year 7 science lesson, for example, students were finding and cutting out pictures of people at different stages of development. However, much of the actual work, including cutting out and sticking pictures on their paper, was completed by staff.
- A phonics programme has been introduced in Years 6, 7 and 8 and this is beginning to have a positive impact on reading and writing skills. Interventions for those with additional special educational needs helps these students make similar progress to their peers.
- Achievement improves from Years 10 to 13 and most students make the progress expected of them and start to catch up as they begin to plan for the future. In these year groups, students benefit from some good and occasionally outstanding teaching which helps them to manage their own behaviour so that they stay in lessons and regularly complete their work.
- Some very good achievement in mathematics was evident, for example where older students were learning to enlarge shapes. They negotiated the best approach to use with their partners and were very proud of their work. They worked well together to achieve their tasks.
- Students in the residence improve their social skills through the good range of activities provided in the evenings. They are able to invite their friends to visit and enjoy planned visits into the community.
- Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium benefit from additional support so that they make similar progress to all other students.
- Those students in the off-site unit benefit from the good quality guidance that staff provide for their personal development but too often staff do too much for them in lessons, leading to a lack of responsibility for completing tasks. This is evident in the limited amount of work in their books.
- Achievement dips in lessons where the management of students' behaviour, including the award of behaviour points, is inconsistent. For example, in some lessons, pupils receive their full points tally when they have not completed their work or behaved appropriately. Other students see this as unfair.
- Improvements to the curriculum are giving students rich and memorable experiences. For example, several students now learn to play a musical instrument. The provision for art has improved and this is raising aspirations, particularly of the older students.
- Achievement in the sixth form is at least good and sometimes outstanding. This is evident in the high quality work in their files and in the progress they make.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Students do not all do enough work for themselves. Progress in lessons slows when teachers do not challenge students enough or have high enough expectations of what they can achieve. Progress also dips when tasks are too easy and not enough is planned for them to do.
- In the younger classes, school staff do not expect students to find their own resources, or help to clear away. This affects students' ability to learn how to take responsibility for themselves.
- Teaching varies too much in quality. It is best where teachers manage students' behaviour well and expect them to take part. This is often evident in older age groups, where teaching is mainly good because of higher expectations, well-planned tasks and better use of the behaviour points system.
- Outstanding teaching in physical education, both in the hall and in the fitness centre, showed

how boys were willing and keen to do well. They showed high levels of respect for the teacher and other staff because of clear rules and successful management. Students responded to instructions and exhibited some maturity in their approaches.

- Too few links between teachers and the residential staff mean that students do not always have opportunities to read or complete school work in the evenings.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good and sometimes outstanding. High levels of challenge and expectations result in some excellent improvement across Years 12 and 13.
- Assessment is uneven. There are examples of good marking in the older age groups, helping students to improve their work and encouraging them to respond. However, this is less evident for younger students where teachers do not always tell them how they could improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils require improvement

- Many students have had poor experiences in previous schools and some have been out of school for lengthy periods. Students who are newer to the school, mainly the younger students, often exhibit challenging behaviour in lessons.
- Because of this, learning in the younger classes is sometimes disrupted by poor behaviour. Some inconsistencies in behaviour management by staff mean that younger students do not learn to manage their own behaviour in these classes quickly enough.
- The behaviour of older students and those in the sixth form is better and is often good. This is because management of behaviour is more consistent in the upper school and staff use behaviour points more effectively.
- In discussion with an inspector, the school council said they like the points system and value the rewards that it brings. However a few admitted that their performance does not always warrant the amount of points staff award them at the end of lessons. Talking about a recent lesson, students said they thought they deserved two points only, but were given four.
- Most students say they feel safe at school and enjoy coming. They say that any bullying is usually dealt with successfully. Older students talked articulately about internal safety and say they know about cyber-bullying and are unaware of any involving pupils at the school.
- Students in the residence say they feel safe. They have good opportunities to influence evening activities and have a say in what they would like to do.
- Attendance across the school is improving slowly, particularly by younger students who now attend regularly.
- Older students have good opportunities to experience the world of work through links with local garages, shops and businesses, and through college links.
- Students' awareness of the wider world has improved because of some good enrichment of the curriculum which enables them to learn about other cultures and lifestyles. This is having a positive impact on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the older students in particular. Students are currently planning some charity fundraising through a cycle ride.

The leadership and management require improvement

- There has been some unavoidable disruption to staffing, including in the leadership team, over the past two years which has had a negative impact on students' behaviour and achievement.
- Current leaders have an accurate view of what needs doing.
- There has been some recent good quality improvement, along with good improvement on the issues identified in the previous inspection report. For example, a relatively new data system, showing each student's achievement, has given leaders a clear picture of where there are weaknesses.
- The curriculum has been reviewed and improved since the previous inspection and this is having a positive impact on improving attendance and providing a rich range of opportunities for students to experience. All students have eagerly taken up new opportunities in physical

education, art and music.

- Too little emphasis on the training of staff in managing students’ behaviour and social and emotional needs has limited improvements across the school. For example, teachers and teaching assistants new to their roles have received too little support or training and this has resulted in the inconsistent quality of teaching currently seen at the school.
- Despite the lack of regular monitoring in the residence recently, staff have worked well together to ensure the smooth running of all aspects of care.
- Leaders promote equality by making sure that pupils who benefit from pupil premium funding are appropriately supported through additional teaching so that they make similar progress to their peers.
- No parents were available to talk about the school as many students arrive daily by taxi while others walk or catch a public bus.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are committed to the school but have not challenged leaders well enough in the past two years. They have a clear view of the direction they want the school to take but have not been sufficiently involved in checking students’ achievement thoroughly enough so that they can identify what is working well and what needs improving. Governors are aware that teaching requires improvement but there has been too little emphasis on improving the performance of staff through training. Systems to manage the performance of staff are in place but they have not been rigorous enough to bring about the improvements necessary to raise achievement. Governors are not clear how the school rewards good teaching or tackles underperformance. Governors make sure that finances are appropriately managed and that the money allocated for students eligible for pupil premium funding is spent on those students.

Outcomes for residential pupils	Adequate
Quality of residential provision and care	Adequate
Residential pupils’ safety	Adequate
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Adequate

- Residential students feel safe, although some incidents of verbal bullying cause upset to some students. Each incident is dealt with effectively but there has been a lack of staff training to prevent incidents. Otherwise residential students behave well; boundaries are adhered to and they begin to manage their own behaviour. They develop self-esteem through the respect, positive reinforcement and praise given to them.
- The quality of boarding provision is adequate. Regular health and safety checks, such as fire drills and testing of fire alarms, ensure a safe environment. Despite the ageing nature of the premises, communal facilities are of a good standard, clean and homely, largely through the efforts of staff and residential students who have decorated parts of the building. However, some of the bedrooms are too small, a shower is broken and the grounds lack maintenance.
- Given the difficulties and an ongoing lack of formal supervision due to the long-term absence of the Head of Care, residential staff have done an exceptional job in maintaining stability. All previous recommendations over which they have control are addressed. Staff are trained in most matters and implement this in practice. Behaviour management and child protection are particular strengths.
- The new system of record keeping is not robust or tamper proof and does not contain all the required detail. Furthermore, some of the information, such as restraints and sanctions, is not

recorded in young people's files in addition to a central record. This is not significant as there are so few incidents but a lack of regular monitoring means that shortfalls are not identified.

- New residential students are supported well by staff and other students and settle quickly into the routine. They make personal progress through the advice and guidance given to them by staff and the incentives offered. Placement plans and health plans, however, are not sufficiently focused or detailed and do not show, for example, how young people with identified weight issues are supported or the arrangements for meeting with friends. The lack of clarity can potentially result in inconsistencies in practice.
- Despite the lack of detail in health plans, the health needs of residential students are well met with good partnership working. The Community and Adolescent Health Service responds promptly to any requests. Meals are healthy, nutritious and well balanced but there is inadequate choice. Students keep fit and participate in a good range of physical recreational activities.
- Residential students' influence and change staff practice through 'boys' meetings. The daily routine offers opportunities for choice, such as evening activities. Consequently residential students are largely satisfied with the service provided. However, very good inexpensive suggestions are not always taken up and this causes some frustration.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

Boarding/Residential provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	123346
Social care unique reference number	SCO13040
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	406156

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of residential provision 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.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	60
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	3
Number of boarders on roll	8
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Foxcroft
Headteacher	Mark Blencowe
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 March 2011
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