

Philpots Manor School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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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.^{1,2}

Information about the school

The school is an independent residential special school and further training centre that provides a holistic approach to education based upon the social and educational principles of Rudolf Steiner. It specialises in provision for children and young people between the ages of 9 and 19 years of age who have been unable to learn and develop within mainstream education. All pupils demonstrate some degree of emotional, behavioural, communication or learning difficulty. The young people who board at the school live in small residential care groups in separate houses within the grounds. The boarding arrangements are flexible in order to meet individual needs, however, the majority of the residential pupils return home every weekend. Pupils are accommodated in small family groups within six units. The last full inspection of the residential provision took place on 9 February 2011.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is good. The school provides a good boarding experience for residential pupils who thrive on the care and support they receive. Pupils progress very well, especially when taking into consideration their starting points when they join the school. Excellent preparation is given to the pupils as part of their transition to further education or work experience. Residential pupils benefit from good relationships with members of staff who provide clear boundaries and a safe and stimulating environment.
- There are outstanding procedures for safeguarding residential pupils which are robust and effective and ensure that their safety is promoted to an excellent level.
- Pupil's emotional well-being is promoted to an excellent standard. The school ensures that they receive swift access to psychological and psychiatric services and have access to therapies which further support their well-being.
- The residential provision is robustly monitored and residential staff provide stable and consistent care. Members of staff are very well supported and are trained and experienced to provide a good standard of care.
- The school has clear action plans in place to address any shortfalls identified in their monitoring systems. Recommendations made at the last inspection have been addressed thoroughly. Security of the premises has undergone a significant and effective overhaul and the child protection procedure is thorough and ensures that any incidents are addressed and pursued in detail.
- The school meets all but one of the national minimum standards. The recording

and administration of medication needs to be consistently achieved. The risk assessment relating to lone working needs to be made more relevant for residential staff and sanctions imposed need to be more consistently recorded in all the houses.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Their experience of boarding enables them to develop their social, life and independence skills to a significant standard, especially when bearing in mind their starting points. Residential pupils are encouraged and enabled, with excellent support, to develop constructive relationships with their peers as well as the adults caring for them. Residential pupils develop tolerance and understanding of each others problems and speak of how they have developed during their time at the school. One pupil reported 'I'm so different from when I came here four years ago.'

Residential pupils benefit from a supportive and nurturing environment where they develop their skills, independence and confidence. Their behaviour is of a very good standard and benefit from an environment with clear boundaries and where tolerance and respect is promoted and valued. Residential pupils give very positive feedback about their experience. Some day pupils are able to earn boarding stays as a reward for positive behaviour. This approach underpins the positive approach and value given to boarding.

Residential pupils have their opinions valued. They have numerous members of staff and adults to whom they can voice their thoughts and feelings. Opportunities to do this are in house meetings, class meetings, visits from the independent visitor and access to a 'named person.' Each residential pupil has a 'named person' who is a member of staff they have chosen to whom they approach. This individual is not normally their teacher or houseparent and so increases the spectrum of adults that they have access to. The approach leads to a culture where their views are seen to be encouraged and valued.

Residential pupils have their health promoted to a very good standard. They have access to doctors, dentists and opticians and the school will ensure that their needs are met in these areas. They have their emotional health promoted to a particularly high standard, having access to numerous therapists and a counsellor as well as psychologists or psychiatrists if needed.

Residential pupils benefit from particularly well-planned and structured transition plans. Each pupil has a plan aimed at developing their life skills at a pace and level appropriate to their understanding and ability. Support for the pupils during this time is excellent and ensures that they receive opportunities to become independent and confident members of society.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the residential provision is good. Pastoral support offered to residential pupils is supportive and nurturing. Each boarder receives a thorough induction in order to prepare for life at the school. There are good links between educational staff and residential care staff. Good communication is achieved and it is clear that all members of staff are kept up to date with relevant information about each pupil.

Care plans are of a good standard. Each pupil's needs are known and the individual plans outline the strengths, vulnerabilities and strategies for support. Close staff support is available and pupils have numerous individuals to who they can go to for support. Residential pupils are offered stimulating and enriching activities both on and off site. Trips to activity centres as well as trips shopping are routinely available as are opportunities to go sailing, kayaking and horse riding. Great care is taken to ensure that the residential pupils have opportunities to experience positive and challenging activities which encourage their confidence and self-esteem.

The emotional health and well-being of the residential pupils is promoted to an excellent standard. They have access to numerous therapists and benefit from nurturing and safe boarding areas. Routine medical appointments are arranged if needed. There is a clear policy and procedure in place for the staff to follow with regards to the administration and storage of medication. Although for the most part, the system is effective, there have been incidents whereby amounts of medication in stock do not tally with the written record or where members of staff have not promptly recorded the administration of a dose of medication. The correct dose as recorded on prescribed medication has on occasion not been administered, but has been changed on advice from a parent without the member of staff consulting with a medical practitioner. This is in clear contravention of the school's medication policy. This approach has led to mistakes in the correct recording and administration of medication.

Residential pupils are offered a healthy menu which meets their nutritional needs. Individual dietary needs in relation to health or cultural needs are met. They also have opportunities to help in the preparation of some meals in their boarding houses. Residential pupils have ready access to fruit and snacks. Meals are well ordered social occasions which are seen as an opportunity to develop social skills.

The quality of residential provision is good. There has been extensive refurbishment and this has resulted in comfortable and well-maintained boarding houses. Residential pupils are able to personalise their own living areas with posters and pictures. They report that their possessions are safe and secure. All residential pupils have ready access to a telephone and are able to contact their home and loved ones.

Residential pupils' safety

The school makes outstanding provision to safeguard residential pupils' safety. It operates a thorough and robust recruitment procedure which ensures that only adults who have been checked as being appropriate to work with children, are employed.

The school has very clear policies and procedures in place with regards to child protection. All members of staff know what to do and who to speak to if they have concerns about a pupil's safety. Concerns are promptly passed on to the relevant agencies and records are clear and detailed on how each issue has been pursued and resolved. The school operates a rigorous approach to bullying. Residential pupils are aware that bullying is not accepted. Any incidents of bullying are closely monitored and action plans to prevent it are put in place. Residential pupils are aware of any issues with regards to cyber bullying. As pupils go home for weekends, there are occasions when there have been issues of cyber conflict while they were at home. The school robustly addresses these issues to ensure that residential pupils' well-being is promoted in the school and that no conflict, which has occurred externally to the school, continues. Residential pupils say they feel safe.

Positive behaviour is encouraged and celebrated. Residential pupils are seen to behave well and with tolerance of each other. There are very clear boundaries in place and residential pupils know what the behavioural expectations and rules are. Incidents of restraint are clearly recorded and rigorously monitored by senior members of staff. It is rare for a residential pupil to be restrained in their boarding area. Sanctions are imposed and are relevant to the misdemeanour. These are also checked by senior members of staff. On occasion sanctions have been imposed which have not been recorded. For example, if a residential pupil has missed an activity due poor behaviour.

No residential pupils have gone missing from the school since the last inspection. There is a clear protocol in place for the staff to follow if this occurs. On occasion a pupil may absent them self from lessons and leave the premises but members of staff know where they are and if necessary will follow them to ensure their safety. Some individual behaviour management plans identify safe places, such as a play area, for pupils to go to if they are feeling distressed and need time away from the group. This ensures that members of staff know where they are while they have a chance to compose themselves.

The safety of the school and residential provision is scrutinised closely and very effectively. Fire precautions and fire equipment are checked on a regular basis. Fire drills are held regularly and all residential pupils receive an induction which includes fire safety and evacuation. Detailed risk assessments are regularly reviewed, updated and endorsed after auditing by senior members of staff. These risk assessments include environmental checks as well as on site and off site activities. Individual risk assessments address behavioural issues of the residential pupils. These include strategies to manage the risk and how to support the residential pupils. The risk assessment policy relating to lone working is generic and does not specifically

address the issues for lone working in a residential house.

Significant investment has occurred to improve the security of the site and premises. The systems in place are robust and both residential pupils and staff have commented on their effectiveness.

Attention to detail underpinned by rigorous scrutiny ensures that the every effort is made to promote residential pupils' safety to an excellent standard.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The management and leadership of the school is good. The school's ethos and aspirations are contained in the prospectus and on the website. Residential pupils have a handbook which outlines what the school provides and their rights and responsibilities. The residential provision is effectively managed and ensures consistent care across the different residential houses. Residential pupils benefit from houses with clear routines and boundaries and are nurtured to develop tolerance and understanding of each other's behaviours and idiosyncrasies. Consistency in care, robust managerial monitoring and good support of staff enables pupils to live in a well-ordered safe community.

Good levels of staffing are maintained and can be increased if a particular pupil needs it. All members of staff receive regular training, especially in key areas such as child protection, physical intervention, first aid, fire safety and health and safety. There is a rolling programme of training members of staff in the Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma. Additionally all members of staff receive regular appraisals and supervision. Members of staff are very positive about the ongoing informal and formal support they receive.

Good links are maintained with parents. House parents will contact them regularly if necessary and share information promptly. The school is particularly good at contacting placing authorities and advocating on behalf of pupils if they feel that their statutory rights are not being met.

Monitoring of the boarding provision is robust. Practice is kept under constant review and this is underpinned by monitoring visits from an independent visitor. Any shortfalls are the subject of action plans which are followed through to completion by senior members of staff. The school also operates a system whereby pupils, parents and members of staff have their opinions canvassed via questionnaires, so that strengths and weaknesses of the setting can be assessed. Action plans regarding issues raised at past inspections have ensured that all areas requiring attention have been effectively addressed. The school's development plan ensures that practice and quality of boarding is under regular review. This ensures that practice is assessed and that the boarding experience of residential pupils is promoted.

The school has a thorough system for ensuring that all the necessary documents and policies are relevant and up to date. Key members of staff ensure that these are regularly reviewed and checked. The policy regarding the administration and recording of medication is new and had not been embedded in practice by all the boarding houses.

There is a clear process in place for the school to deal with complaints from either pupils or parents. All complaints are investigated promptly and resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant. Residential pupils are seen to be confident in expressing their opinions and have numerous members of staff as well as external agencies to whom they can complain.

Residential pupils' individual needs are known and met. A diverse population of both members of staff and pupils ensures that difference is celebrated and seen as an opportunity to learn from each other. Individual care plans and risk assessments identify each residential pupil's specific needs so that they can receive the care, support and nurturing that they need.

All information is appropriately and safely stored to ensure that confidentiality of records is maintained. Records kept are thorough and give a good account of each residential pupil's time and experience at the school.

National minimum standards

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.

- The school has, and implements, appropriate policies for the care of children who are unwell. These include first aid, care of those with chronic conditions and disabilities, administration of medicines and dealing with medical emergencies. The provision of accommodation for children who are unwell has regard to any requirements set out in regulations relating to school premises. (NMS 3.6)

What should the school do to improve further?

- review the risk assessment relating to lone working so that it is relevant to members of staff working in residential houses
- ensure that all house parents consistently record all sanctions imposed on residential pupils.

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.



22/09/2011

Dear pupils

Inspection of Philpots Manor School

As you will know Ofsted recently inspected the boarding houses at your school. The inspectors visited the houses, spoke to many of you, met with members of staff and looked at records. Many of you sent in questionnaires. We also received questionnaires from some parents and most of the members of staff. We found that you were all very helpful and honest with us.

We feel that your school provides a very caring and safe place for you to live. We are impressed with the new security arrangements in your houses and the fact that you all feel safe living there. It is good that you all have different members of staff who you can talk to and that you all have a 'named person.' It was very good to see you all relaxing with members of staff and that you can have a laugh with them.

We are very impressed with the activities that you are offered, especially ones where you can try new and exciting experiences such as sailing, horse riding and kayaking. It is good that you don't spend a lot of your time on computers and instead try to be sociable. We saw you all behaving very well and thought that you were very tolerant of each other, even when people were having a difficult time. We are pleased that you can all telephone your home and loved ones.

I have asked that the school ensures that you all receive the correct doses of medication that the doctor has said some of you should take. If your parents want that to be different from what the doctor says then the staff must check with a doctor first.

Sometimes a pupil is given a sanction, such as missing out on an activity. If this happens then it must be recorded in the sanctions book. We have asked the school to make sure this happens.

Overall, we were very impressed with your school and think that you all do very well there.

We really enjoyed meeting you all and wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Taylor / Janet Hunnam