

Grafham Grange School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Gaynor Moorey / Paul Taylor
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Head / Principal	Raymond Henry Winn
Date of last inspection	24 February 2009

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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 outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

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

Grafham Grange School is a non-maintained residential special school for up to 44 boys aged from 10 to 16 years with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The Grafham Grange Special Educational Trust administers the school.

All young people attending the school have complex and challenging needs. Many will have experienced breakdowns of previous educational placements and have had periods out of full-time education. Boarding provision is organised into four living units, three within the main school and the fourth for Year 11 pupils located at the nearby site.

Summary

This announced key inspection took place over two days. The purpose of the inspection was to undertake a full review encompassing all the key national minimum standards for residential special schools.

A good standard of care is provided with the support of the head of care and experienced staff team. The staff promote the safety of the young people, by following clear and comprehensive guidance, policies and procedures. Observation during the inspection showed the school to have improved the day-to-day management of the pupils' behaviour. The staff provide the children with excellent support and encourage the pupils with their education and interests. Pupils enjoy contact with family and are given opportunities to express their opinions and make choices about their lives. The school is maintained to an outstanding level, providing a homely environment to live in. The staff are supported by the senior management team who provide the staff with supervision, training and support. The staff also contribute to the development of the organisation.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the school received seven recommendations which included: ensuring healthy living initiatives are promoted with a whole school approach to stopping smoking; ensuring mealtimes are well-ordered social occasions; ensuring appropriate action is taken when young people are using discriminatory and abusive language; ensuring the standard of behaviour at the school is maintained to a satisfactory manner; ensuring that young people do not become involved in the restraint of other young people at the school; ensuring a review of menus is undertaken to look at the food provided at mealtimes; and ensuring that appropriate management of daily routines is in place.

The school has taken action to address these issues over the last year and looked at improving the school's approach to working towards decreasing the smoking problem. The school is to become a no-smoking facility this year. The food provided to the pupils in the school has improved, with the school now bringing in a nutritionist and dietician to look at the menus. Mealtimes in the school have improved and the mealtimes were seen to be more organised and social occasions.

Behaviour management in the school has improved; the general atmosphere has become calmer, and behaviour and abusive language was dealt with appropriately by the staff. The restraint records were seen, and since the last inspection none of the older pupils have been involved in restraints with the younger pupils. The management of the school has become stronger and more routines and boundaries have been put into place.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The food offered to the pupils is varied and healthy. The catering staff are well aware of any specific dietary needs, whether these are based on religious, cultural or medical grounds. The pupils are offered a choice of menus. The menu gives the pupils the opportunity to enjoy foods from a variety of different cultural backgrounds. They can voice their opinions about the food and their preferences in formal settings, such as the school council, informally with teaching and care staff and by filling out occasional questionnaires.

Health needs of the pupils are very well met. Appointments with health professionals are arranged and specialist input is gained to ensure that the pupils' emotional and physical health is promoted. The school nurse ensures that the health care needs of the pupils are known and met. She offers guidance, education and support in areas such as substance misuse, sexual health and smoking cessation. Pupils are still permitted to smoke in some areas of the school grounds if they have their parents' permission. There are plans to phase out smoking on the whole site by April 2010. Pupils have written consent from their parent or guardian with regards to the administration of medication or first aid.

The nurse has a robust system for ensuring that the administration of medication is monitored and regularly audited.

The health of the young people both physically and emotionally is valued and promoted to a very good standard.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

There is a clear policy and guidance for the staff to follow in relation to ensuring that the confidentiality and privacy of the pupils is protected. Pupils said they feel they have privacy within their living accommodation. Staff are aware of the importance of privacy and know with whom they can share sensitive information. All confidential information is kept securely stored.

Young people are confident to express their opinions. The young people felt their worries and issues were dealt with fairly by the staff. The young people can use all staff to speak to including more formal avenues such as key workers, the care managers and the independent visitors. The vast majority of complaints are dealt with at an informal level; however, when pupils have chosen to complain formally, the process is well documented and resolutions were seen to be investigated internally and, where needed, externally.

The school has clear guidance for the staff to follow if they have concerns about a pupil's welfare. The members of staff are offered regular training to ensure that they are aware of their obligations. The head of care keeps thorough, detailed and well-organised records of any

child protection concerns. These include details of all agencies involved and how the issue has been resolved.

The school operates a policy of zero tolerance towards bullying and the pupils are made aware of the guidance on admission. If bullying does occur, staff at the school deal with issues in an appropriate manner. The pupils are risk assessed for any potential issues related to bullying behaviour. Clear examples of how incidents are appropriately dealt with were seen during the inspection. The school has forums for pupils to talk on a one-to-one basis or as a group to look at any issues there may be within the landings they live on. The pupils did identify that bullying did happen at the school but it was dealt with by the staff.

The staff team are very aware of each pupil's vulnerability and level of risk should they go missing. Pen pictures are kept in each pupil's key-work file together with a photograph. This ensures that the information is readily available to the police should a pupil go missing.

Positive behaviour is encouraged and rewarded when it is achieved. Pupils can earn points throughout the day and this is rewarded by being able to have activities off the school's site and by earning money. Pupils are also rewarded for achieving targets identified in their key-work sessions. Staff have worked very hard over the last year to improve conduct and behaviour around the school and the atmosphere appeared to be calmer.

The school operates a system whereby records of incidents of challenging behaviour are assessed and collated with a view to analysing them and thereby identifying critical times and triggers. This in turn informs strategies for the staff team to develop in order to minimise incidents.

Staff respond positively to acceptable behaviour. All sanctions are recorded in a dedicated book. The sanctions given are permissible and within the school's sanctions policy.

All staff receive training in the use of physical restraint. The school has a policy which offers guidance to staff with regard to behaviour management and restraint. The young people have risk assessments that look at any risky behaviour; these sit alongside their behaviour management plans. Staff encourage acceptable behaviour, and restraint records show that staff respond appropriately in managing these situations. Staff support pupils with their behaviour through one-to-one sessions and group meetings.

The school has a clear recording system for the use of all restraint which includes feedback from the young people and whether any injury was sustained by staff or pupils. The records reflect that restraint is frequently used in the school.

Areas of potential risk for the pupils are assessed and the young people are safeguarded where possible from harm. The school has documentation related to risk-assessing activities, holidays, fire risk and the environment. Records demonstrate that the school's fire alarm system is tested regularly and evacuation exercises carried out. Clear systems are in place and checks could be seen from outside agencies and from the school's monitoring systems.

The recruitment process operated by the school is robust and thorough. Records were seen for all new staff at the school and clearly all records were in place before they started their employment. The school also updates Criminal Records Bureau checks every three years.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The residential contribution to promoting education for the pupils is a strength of the school. The sharing of information between education and care staff ensures young people are given the practical and emotional support they need. The pupils have detailed and well thought through care plans which identify their educational and social targets. Pupils are aware of their targets and spend time reviewing their progress with key workers and teachers.

Members of the care staff work with the pupils during school hours and are available for support if they need it. Staff know the pupils well and are aware of their individual needs and targets. Pupils speak very positively about the support and care that they receive from the staff team. One pupil reported, 'It's easier to learn here than all other schools I've been to.'

The school has an excellent activities programme and on each evening pupils are able to choose between activities on the school site and activities taking place in the community. Activities are well planned and varied and it is clear that the pupils are given opportunities to experience events and occasions which enrich and develop their progress.

The level of individual support offered to the pupils is outstanding. Each pupil's needs and idiosyncrasies are known and the staff work very closely across the curriculum to ensure that pupils receive the support and guidance that they need.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils are given numerous opportunities to voice their opinions on how the school is run. There is a school council which meets regularly to discuss various issues. The pupils have managed to influence areas such as activities and equipping a common room, as a result of the school council meetings.

Pupils meet with their key workers on a regular basis to discuss their progress, concerns and targets. Targets are agreed by the pupils and this gives them the opportunity to influence decisions about themselves. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to meet school governors and senior members of staff. Additionally, the pupils are constantly able to share their views on how life is for them at the school, on a daily informal basis in their interactions with class teachers, tutors and residential care staff. Pupils are confident that their views are listened to and respected.

The admission of new pupils and the process of transition and moving on, are areas which are carefully thought through. The detail of planning these processes involves multidisciplinary input including teaching, medical, care and therapeutic staff. The pupil's strengths, weaknesses and aspirations are known by all involved in the process. The school appreciates and values parents' input in this process, which is underpinned by their knowledge of their own children. The school has a member of staff who actively liaises with parents to ensure that they feel included and supported in promoting their child's education. The staff team appreciate that for most pupils the process of transition and moving on can be upsetting and anxiety provoking. The detailed and thorough assessment process ensures that pupils' needs are known and met to an excellent standard and that they feel supported.

Pupils are able to contact parents and loved ones by mobile telephones, the school's telephone and by email.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The school has clear input into preparing young people for independence. The school has a Year 11 unit where the young people are able to be away from the main school building. The staff within the unit encourage the young people to learn skills such as cooking, budgeting and domestic tasks. Some of the older pupils also live in the main school and the landing where they stay has been converted to offer them the same facilities.

For those young people who are looked after by the local authority, pathway plans were seen on file. Records demonstrate that all young people have transitional planning which is implemented well in advance of proposed departures. The family liaison officer works alongside the staff to provide both support and funding for those wishing to stay on at the school and works to support those who are moving on to training, jobs and college. Staff confirmed that many pupils maintain contact with the school on leaving.

The members of staff responsible for the maintenance of the school premises work extremely hard to ensure that the quality of the premises is maintained to an outstanding level. The school is a large building and there is a rolling refurbishment plan to ensure that natural wear and tear is addressed. Additional to this rolling programme, the maintenance team respond promptly to repairing parts of the building which have been damaged.

The pupils who stay within the school live on landings which are split into year groups. The youngest pupils stay in the top of the house in a unit designed to be cosy and homely and where the pupils can have age-appropriate toys, facilities and decoration. The two more senior landings have been renovated to an excellent standard and appropriately reflect the pupils' age groups. The senior landing now has a kitchen where the boys can make their own breakfast and practice domestic skills. Pupils are able to personalise their rooms and dormitory areas with posters and pictures and have sufficient storage space for their clothing and belongings.

The pupils have sufficient bathrooms and toilets facilities, with some of these having been re-furbished since the last inspection.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff ensure through practice and guidance that the rights of the pupils are met and they do not face racism or discriminatory abuse. The pupils have their cultural needs met by individualised care planning and review processes which highlight and guide staff to meet the wishes of the pupils themselves.

The school has a variety of information linked to the Statement of Purpose including the pupils' guide to living on the landings. The guidance offers a clear picture of the school, its ethos and its daily routines. Alongside the Statement of Purpose the school has up-to-date comprehensive policies and procedures.

The overall management of the school systems is good. The staff have worked very hard in the last year on the day-to-day management of the pupils and this was seen to have changed, with new ideas around trigger points of where behaviour could be unmanageable. The school felt calmer with staff being more in charge of supporting the pupils with their behaviour. Staff said they feel supported by the management team and gain knowledge and extra support from the team around them.

The care team comprises both those with experience and new staff who have been employed since the start of the new school year. The team are supported by the head of care and clear systems of supervision and training that are in place. The staff said they feel supported and happy with the extensive training they are now offered. There were very clear examples of how the induction process was being used.

The school has clear lines of mandatory training such as first aid, safeguarding children, health and safety and behaviour management. Staff also undertake National Vocational Qualifications which is inclusive of all staff across the school.

The school has an overall comprehensive system in place for the monitoring of practice and safety issues. There is a Regulation 33 visitor who visits once every half term. Monitoring and statistics of issues such as restraint, being absent without permission and behaviour management are seen and are being used as part of looking at reducing such incidents as a whole.

The school currently has a Principal who was employed in April 2009. The pupils said they felt the school has got better in the last year but they would like the Principal to be more involved with them.

The organisation continues to evolve with new developmental plans and new initiatives. The organisation ensures that it involves all the staff in looking at developments and holds an annual strategic day which all staff attend.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure healthy living initiatives are promoted with a whole school approach to stopping smoking (NMS 14)
- ensure continued development towards the reduction of the use of restraint. (NMS10)