

Bladon House School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Martha Nethaway / Katarina Djordjevic
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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

Bladon House School is a co-educational school approved by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCFS) to admit children between the ages of five and 19-years-old who are autistic, have speech and language difficulties and moderate or severe learning disabilities. Most of the students have complex needs and as a result may display behaviour which challenges and impacts on their opportunities for inclusion. There are 66 residential places and 30 day places.

Staff employed at the school include teachers and teaching support staff, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, ancillary staff and care staff. The school also employ a forensic psychologist and behaviour consultant on a contract basis. Each student has an interdisciplinary team (ID) who are responsible for assessing needs, producing, monitoring and reviewing education and care plans.

Boarding accommodation is situated on two sites. The main site is set in extensive grounds. There are five houses on the main site, two of which are portakabin accommodation. The number of beds in each house varies from three to 14 beds. Students are accommodated according to their gender, age and compatibility. Each house has its own lounge, dining room and small kitchen. All bedrooms are single.

Abbey Lodge is a detached property and is situated in Burton and accommodates students of both sexes who are mostly 16-years-old and over.

Each house has its own team of care staff including a house manager and waking night staff. The school buys in catering and ancillary services.

The school is near the town of Burton and the city of Derby. The school has its own transport, which is used to enable students to access community facilities.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This inspection was a key announced visit. The outcome groups for Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Positive Contribution, Economic Wellbeing and Organisation were examined. The recommendations set at the last inspection were also followed up as part of this visit. Students were observed interacting with staff. Discussions were held with students, staff and management.

Staff show commitment and work hard to achieve the best outcomes for students. Bladon House School now has a planned programme of new building works to help improve the quality of the residential accommodation for the boarding provision.

There are five recommendations set as a result of this inspection visit.

Improvements since the last inspection

Bladon House School continues to demonstrate commitment to ensuring the service meets the National Minimum Standards.

At the last inspection, the school was recommended to review the handling, storage, administration and recording of medications which has now been achieved. The school has implemented suitable procedures to monitor and review staff practice in relation to the management of medications.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Bladon House School continues to provide a good environment that promotes good outcomes for student's health and well-being. Each student has in place an individualised health plan that identifies their level of need. Key workers play a central role and ensure all information is updated and regularly reviewed. Senior managers are regularly monitoring on the quality of health planning. Students are able to access specialist resources including the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) who provide a multidisciplinary approach to ensure effective assessment, treatment and support is available for student's health problems.

Bladon House School has in place a good policy and procedure for the safe management of medications. This policy is very precise in order to ensure that medication is handled in a safe way. Staff are provided with procedures in relation to the receipt, storage and administration of medication and controlled medication. However, staff at Abbey Lodge did not follow the school's correct procedures of recording medications and this applied to the receipt of a new supply of medication. Similarly, staff did not correctly detail that the child had been away from the home and appropriate entries were not made on the medication administration record (MAR). The senior management are taking corrective action to ensure this practice is not repeated.

Staff receive appropriate training to be able to manage first aid and emergencies. Staff maintain clear records of all accidents and injuries, and senior managers monitor and review all practices.

Student meals are prepared and cooked by a catering team. This team recognises that good nutrition is good for overall health, growth and development. However, the funding for school meals is very tight and this budget-wise approach does not offer the scope of meals that are appealing all of the time. The catering staff do make effective use of seasonal products and have competitive food suppliers in-order not to waste money. Food menus are prepared in advance and student's individual preferences are catered for successfully. The relationship between the residential

units and the kitchen staff are very effective.

The main meals are eaten in the central dining room. The standard of the dining room and furnishings are clean and presentable. Staff promote good hygiene routines by encouraging students to use hygienic hand rub from the dispensing units. Staffing levels take account of students needs in terms of supporting them with their meals and providing good supervision. Staff act as good role models. Meal times are experienced as a positive opportunity for students to socially engage with each other and staff. The dining room can become busy and the noise levels increases accordingly.

At Abbey Lodge staff and students prepare and cook their meals. This encourages students to develop good practical cooking skills. Students experience of meals times are positive and are a good opportunity for socialising with peers and staff.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Bladon House School continues to promote the welfare and protection of students from abuse. Staff are provided with clear policies and systems to prevent abuse. Staff have a clear understanding of their role and responsibility to report suspected incidents and concerns related to the welfare of students. The school has a good awareness and level of practice in terms of child protection. Staff receive regular training in connection with safeguarding, including topics related to students with disabilities. The designated child-protection co-ordinator follows clear recording and reporting practices. However, one gap existed where the school did not notify Ofsted about one case since the last inspection. The school intends to rectify this shortfall, immediately.

Bladon House School has an effective complaints process and this is well published. Parents, carers and students regularly use these procedures. Records show evidence of complaints being addressed professionally and sensitively. The school demonstrates a positive approach to correcting immediate problems.

The day-to-day routines of the units afford students their rights which helps protect their privacy. Staff know how to manage confidential information. Students can make and receive phone call and are allowed to use their own personal mobiles.

Bladon House School ensures that students are protected from bullying by others and this is underpinned by the school's policy and staff practice. Staff provide good supervision levels and the compatibility of students is given good consideration by staff and senior management. Student's risk assessments cover the area related to counteracting bullying.

Staff are provided with clear procedures in the event of any student being absent without permission. Incidents are low and staff follow the safe and well checks when a student is returned to a safe place. Student's risk assessment clearly identify any

particular vulnerabilities and staff are expected to be vigilant and communicate effectively about student's whereabouts.

Staff and student's levels of interactions are positive. Staff promote student's good behaviour and this helps develop their self-confidence and self-esteem. Staff are provided with a clear policy named, 'Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy' which reinforces key messages about the promotion of acceptable behaviours when staff work with students. Each student has a 'Support and Management of Behaviour plan' so that staff have a clear understanding of the causes and triggers of difficult behaviours. Staff work with some very challenging behaviours and receive good support from a forensic psychologist and behavioural consultant who visit the school regularly. Staff are provided with advice and intervention techniques, and this allows staff to help students modify their behaviours. Staff receive training in the use of physical intervention. Senior management monitor all physical interventions and how staff are applying sanctions.

Staff pay good attention to health and safety matters at Bladon House School. The school fulfils its duty to protect students and staff in turn have a clear understanding that health and safety is everybody's concern. This is clearly underpinned by a comprehensive health and safety policy and procedure. Staff complete risk assessments which are regularly reviewed and updated. Senior managers take responsibility to manage health and safety and ensure that the school's policies are fully implemented in practice. Fire safety checks are being completed. Students are participating in fire evacuations so that they learn prompt, safe, and coordinated evacuations and staff know how to manage a real emergency.

Bladon House School has in place good procedures for the recruitment and selection of staff. Senior staff ensure that the necessary checks are being completed and staff are deemed suitable to work with vulnerable students. In one case, the staff file did not demonstrate a robust approach to checking the gaps in employment and education. The head teacher intends to take corrective action to ensure this shortfall is not repeated in the future.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Bladon House School provides an onsite main school. Staff provide access to a 24 hour curriculum which emphasizes learning across the day in all settings. Students attend small class groups of up to eight students. All students have in place an individual education plan which is informed by the student's statement of educational need. Residential support staff are involved with the students during their school day and this provides good continuity of care. Bladon House School recognises that interdisciplinary team of working is critical to student's academic achievement. Each student receives on going assessment which are carried out by teaching, therapy and care staff. Staff are highly skilled at ensuring that targets accurately reflect the needs of the individual student. Parents and carers receive annual reports at the end of the academic year.

Staff provide an environment that helps meet the needs of students and help them participate as active members of their community. Students are attending an excellent spectrum of local clubs and activities. For example, they are involved in Scouts, horse riding and the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Students also learn to take care of a range of small farm animals including poultry and participate in a range of horticulture activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

All students are provided with a key worker and their role is central to maintaining effective communication across care and education. Students are actively encouraged to share their views during individual key worker sessions and the key worker advocates on behalf of the students. Students attend regular house meetings and have excellent opportunities to discuss the day-to-day matters that affect them. Staff fully engage in this process and ensure that discussions are student led and focussed on their needs.

All students are provided with a placement plan that details the specific needs of the student and which outlines how these will be met. Staff ensure that students are at the centre of all planning and a wide range of issues are discussed in the plans. Student's specific strengths are identified which includes their communication skills and the placement plans provide a broad understanding of the student's likes and dislikes. There is evidence that care and teaching staff consult parents and social workers about the content of the placement plans. Through a multidisciplinary approach, staff can successfully respond to student's changing needs.

Bladon House School has a good process in place for the admission of new students. It is usual for an informal visit to take place by the parent or other responsible person before a formal referral is taken. A decision to assess is made by the head teacher or the assessment manager. For the prospective student, a short residential stay is organised so that a comprehensive assessment can be completed by the multidisciplinary team. These reports are generally detailed and informative. However, the supporting documents in relation to this process are not fully completed in all cases and specifically about related welfare matters. As a result, the school is not always making a reasonable effort to obtain all the necessary information about a child prior to admission.

Bladon House School provides placements for a 38-week residence and consequently students are free to return home at weekends and during school holidays. There is no residential facilities for visitors but staff help with finding nearby accommodation. Students are encouraged to maintain contact by phone or letter. For students with specific communication needs, the school can meet their particular needs in maintaining effective contact.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Bladon House School has plans in place to build three new residential houses which has now received approval from South Derbyshire District Council. These plans will help improve the residential accommodation for students. The current accommodation is decorated to a comfortable standard. Students are able to personalise their bedrooms to reflect their choice and taste.

There are sufficient bathing and toileting facilities for students in each of the houses.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Bladon House School continues to be a well managed school. The senior management team provide good quality leadership and management, and are in control of the direction of the school. The school has in place a straightforward 'Statement of Purpose' and 'School Prospectus' which informs parents, guardians, students and significant stakeholders about what can be expected from the school. These documents clearly describe the principles and philosophy of care and education.

Senior managers are effective and ensure that all staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities across the 24 hour curriculum and that all aspects of care and education are of a good standard. There is good clarity of the role and responsibilities of senior care staff who receive direct guidance from the senior management group. Bladon House School ensures there are enough staff to meet the day-to-day needs of the students. The school is able to cover staff absenteeism and sick leave within the existing staff group who work extra overtime to cover these shifts.

Care staff receive regular supervision and senior staff provide a positive ethos of promoting accountability. This is unpinned by regular staff team meetings. All staff receive annual appraisals and staff are effectively managed. Staff training is given a good priority by the school. There is a programme of induction for all new staff which is related to the successful completion of a probationary period. The school continues to make good progress with ensuring that staff obtain their Level 3 training. In addition, staff receive an extensive programme of in-house training. For example, 'Augmentative Communication, Autism, Intensive interaction, Deaf Awareness, Working with Loss and Bereavement and Working with Families'. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff ensure that students receive a good education and benefit from learning and wider opportunities.

Bladon House School demonstrates that the quality assurance monitoring continues to improve practice with clear aims to achieve the best outcomes for students. Senior managers are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Senior

management are completing regular audits across education and care which assists with a cycle of continual monitoring and improvement.

The school employs an independent visitor who monitors the welfare of students on a monthly basis. After these unannounced visits a report is made available to the school. The report is framed against the Every Child Matters agenda outcome groups. Where there are shortfalls, the school has a clear plan to take corrective action to address gaps with staff practice and the implementation of policies and procedures.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure that staff follow the written guidance with particular reference to recording the receipt of all medications. NMS 14.17
- provide adequate quantities of suitably prepared wholesome and nutritious food. NMS 15.1
- ensure that all significant events related to the protection of children in school are notified to Ofsted. NMS 7.1
- ensure applicants explanations of any gaps in employment with a written record have been sought and are satisfactory. NMS 27.2 (ix)
- ensure the school makes reasonable efforts to obtain all necessary information about a child prior to admission. NMS 11.3.