

The Marchant-Holliday School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Paul Clark
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Nominated person	
Date of last inspection	04/03/2009

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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 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

The Marchant-Holliday School provides residential education for up to 32 boarders and eight day pupils aged from five to 12 years old who have special education needs. All boarders go home for the weekend at least once every two weeks.

The school is situated in rural surroundings three miles from the nearest town. The residential accommodation is contained in the newly refurbished main house and in an adjoining building completed in September 2004.

Marchant-Holliday School is an independent non-profit making charity. It is managed by the Board of Governors, who are also Trustees, and by a senior management team.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This school offers a unique, highly specialised and therapeutic level of care to children who present a range of educational and behavioural challenges. Its underpinning ethos and methodology is designed to rebuild children's self-esteem through a collaborative approach between care and teaching staff and the other therapeutic services provided by the school and external professionals. The school works closely with parents to ensure that the advances made by children attending the school are transferred to their home living environment.

Children feel safe in a warm and protective environment and they enjoy the benefits of the extensive range of resources available to them within the pleasant and extensive rural setting.

Improvements since the last inspection

The school has addressed both of the two recommendations made at the previous inspection. Private telephone booths are now in place in the residential accommodation from which boarders may make personal telephone calls in private. Governor's monitoring visits are now conducted every half term and a written report is sent to the school.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The health needs of children placed at the school are well managed. All children placed at the school have a statement of special educational needs (SEN). This statement includes a description of their health needs. The school completes an admission checklist on each child in consultation with parents. This records the child's health history and any current conditions as well as recording contact details of their home GP and of any other health professional involved. All children boarding at the school are registered with a local GP, dentist and optician. Parents are required to ensure that routine health checks are carried out but the school will undertake these if parents are unable to. There is a well equipped and well ordered medical surgery at the school which is overseen by the school matron who is a qualified nurse. Medication, including controlled drugs, prescribed and household medication is correctly stored and administered. The matron trains all staff who administer medication and a dated record of this training is kept.

The school will refer any children in need of psychiatric or psychologist assessment to the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) team. A sufficient number of care and teaching staff have been trained in first aid to ensure that there is always a member of staff on duty with these skills.

Staff are trained to support, in a discreet and sympathetic manner, those children who may bed wet or soil . Bed linen is changed weekly or more often if required. The school has an in house laundry service. The school has a well equipped kitchen which is managed by a Kitchen Manager who oversees the catering staff and service. An environmental health inspection has taken place within the past 18 months of this inspection date, which states that the kitchen and food preparation areas are kept in a proper and hygienic manner. Menu plans seen indicate that a varied, balanced and nutritious diet is provided. There are currently no children placed who require special diets although the catering manager states that their needs would be met on an individual basis.

Young people are consulted about their food choices at School Council meetings and at general school forums. Young people state that they are happy with the food provided.

The Bursar/Business Manager acts as the member of the senior management team with responsibility for health and safety issues. All parts of the premises and external areas with the potential for harm have been appropriately risk assessed by a specialist agency annually commissioned by the school.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The school takes clearly directed measures to ensure children's safety and wellbeing. The school has clearly written policies on child protection, dealing with complaints, bullying, discipline, the use of physical restraint and action to be taken in the event of a child absconding. Staff acquaint themselves with these policies as part of their induction and sign to confirm that they have read and understand these policies. All staff have received training in child protection and this training is updated at appropriate frequencies. The school has an appointed Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO) to whom staff will refer any safeguarding concern. The DCPO has been trained to the appropriate level by the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). Two safeguarding concerns have been referred to the appropriate local authorities within the past 12 months and appropriate action taken.

The school carries out effective staff vetting and recruitment practices according to LSCB recommendations. All staff have an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check, at least two professional references which are followed up verbally, and complete a 'Self Disclosure Declaration of Health' questionnaire. If taxis are used to transport children the school ensures that taxi companies and their drivers are regulated to comply with CRB checks.

The school has comprehensively written information documents available to all stakeholders about the school's complaints procedure. The record of complaints received and actions taken indicate that the schools responses to complaints received are appropriate.

Very little evidence of bullying was drawn from children's questionnaire returns or from conversations with them. Children spoken to felt that bullying would be dealt with effectively if brought to the attention of staff.

The school has identified written sanctions which are known to young people and a behavioural management system is in place based on the acquisition of reward points. The children spoken to felt that the system was fair and equitable. All staff are trained in the use of physical restraint and this training is appropriately updated. A record is kept of any incidences where physical restraint has been applied. This record and the record of sanctions applied is monitored by the head teacher.

The school carries out and effectively records its fire safety measures including evacuation drills and alarm and equipment checks. Staff are trained in basic fire safety measures. The school is arranging for its recently appointed caretaker to be trained as the Designated Officer responsible for coordinating fire safety within the school.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children live in a supportive and encouraging environment where their group and individual needs are met. There is good communication between teaching and care staff and forums are in place for the exchange of information about individual children. Teaching staff are actively involved in the residential and out of school activities and care staff support young people with their educational needs. Good systems are in place to keep parents informed about their children's educational and behavioural progress. Each child has a statement of special educational need and individual education plans and care plans are in place for each child which clearly identify their individual needs.

The school employs a qualified counsellor two days each week who will do one-to-one work with individual children to help them with their social and educational progress. The school also has an independent visitor who is well known to the children and who they can speak to in private about any area of concern. As previously stated the school will refer children to the local CAMHS team (via their GP) if they feel a child needs a psychiatric or psychological assessment. The school has a Behavioural Support Unit where children's individual needs are also supported. Each child has an appointed member of staff who acts as their key worker or 'Special Person', and who will have a unique knowledge of a particular child.

Each child's bedroom has a desk and study area and there are designated study areas around the building for out of school study. There is a well stocked library which the children can access. There are appropriately safeguarded IT systems in place which the young people can access under staff supervision.

The children enjoy a vast range of evening and weekend activities both within and around the campus. These include quad bike and motorised go-karting which the children particularly enjoy. There are large wooded and wildlife areas around the school to support the recreational needs of developing children. Several of the children attend local scout and cub groups and others attend sporting clubs locally.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

A School Council meeting is held every half term. This is chaired by a pupil and is attended by pupil representatives of each class who consult their peers about issues that they wish to be raised at these meetings. There was evidence seen that issues raised at previous meetings have been actioned by the school. There is an array of forums available, both formal and informal, where children are encouraged to express their views about their day to day living and the running of the school. The school has a 'Special Person' system where an identified member of the care staff acts as a child's key worker and will ascertain a child's feelings about their life at the

school. Children may also make their feelings known to the schools independent visitor who visits the school on a regular basis. There is also a school counsellor with whom children can discuss any areas of concern.

The school has a young person's guide giving children a range of information about the school. This is written in a user friendly format. Children may be initially placed at the school on a provisional trial basis.

Children leaving the school are given a memory folder which contains photographs and their records of achievements. Additionally, a programme of transition is prepared for them by the school to try to achieve a gradual change.

Each child has a clearly written, comprehensive and up to date case file which identifies their assessed needs and the way that these will be met. These plans are appropriately reviewed. Children are able to communicate with their parents via the private telephone booths, or wireless phones, or by using the school's email system. The school maintains regular contact with parents by daily or weekly telephone, or email contact or written weekly reports.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The school holds money given by parents to cover a weekly, aged related pocket money scale. The school will ensure that all children will receive the same amount of weekly pocket money regardless of whether or not their parents are financially able to provide this. This money is administered by the school and recorded in an effective and appropriate manner.

Children must wear school uniform during the school day but change into their 'civvies' at the end of the school day and weekends. All children's clothing is laundered by the school and children were seen to be wearing appropriate clothing suitable for their age range.

All of the sleeping and living areas throughout the residential provision are purpose built and are of a high standard of cleanliness, décor and furnishing. Children are able to personalise their bedrooms with their personal effects. The majority of bedrooms are single and en suite. For those sharing bedrooms there are an ample number of bathrooms and toilets. Children are given privacy when changing and bathing. Good relationships were observed between staff and children which seemed to convey a mutual respect. Care staff always knock before entering bedrooms. The school provides children with toiletries although parents may furnish their children with toiletries according to their own personal tastes. There are an abundance of toys and recreational and educational facilities available to the children.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity within the school is outstanding. This is evidenced by its clearly written equal opportunities, racial awareness and disability policies; its practice in addressing issues of special needs amongst the young people it cares for and the way it trains its staff to understand children's needs. (For example, the school has arranged for all staff to attend training organised by the National Autistic Society to ensure that they fully understand the needs of the children they are caring for). Additionally, all staff, including domestic staff, have been trained in basic sign language; the school has an annual 'International Day' and a 'Friendship Day' to promote children's respect of other cultures and nationalities; the menu plan actively promotes international cuisine; there are positive images of diversity groups displayed throughout the school.

The school has a clearly written and comprehensive Statement of Purpose which spells out the aims and objectives of the school. There is a young person's guide which gives each child a good range of information about the school. The schools policies and procedures are comprehensive and clearly written and are available to all staff and stakeholders. There are clearly written and up to date records of individual children's needs and their developmental progress contained within their case files.

As previously stated, staff personnel files and the single central record of vetting and recruitment checks show that the school is rigorous in that regard. Over 80% of the care staff have the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 in Child Care and are encouraged and supported in undertaking further professional awards. All care staff receive one to one supervision at least every half term. A comprehensive staff induction checklist is in place for all newly appointed staff. All staff undergo an annual professional development review that looks at their training and developmental needs. Staff have access to a range of training opportunities that ensure that they have the key skills required to look after the needs of the children that they care for.

The school is subject to regular monitoring visits from members of the governing body and written reports are made to identify areas of necessary internal development