

The Loddon School

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Merryl Wahogo
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Date of last inspection	16/09/2008

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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 Loddon School provides education and residential care for up to 28 pupils, eight to 19 years of age who have severe and complex learning difficulties, associated with autism. All have communication difficulties, a number have additional disabilities and all exhibit challenging behaviour to varying degrees. The school operates as a charitable trust and is approved by the Department for Education and Skills. It provides a 52-week a year service and is, therefore, registered as a children's home. Of the children, 12 are accommodated in the main house that is organised into three residential units. There are three additional units, one accommodating four young people, a two-bedroom lodge and a six-bedded unit designed for older pupils. The school has extensive grounds that are well used for horticulture and animal management, as well as leisure activities. It has its own indoor swimming pool.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was the interim inspection, following up on the recommendations from the last inspection. It also looked at standards under staying safe and economic well-being. The principal, together with the senior management team, has ensured that all the recommendations from the last report have been acted upon. Over and above this, however, they have created a number of improvements to monitoring systems, which ensure that the organisation is exceptionally well able to respond to the changing needs of both the young people and the staff. Furthermore, there have been extensive improvements to many areas of the main house, so that much of the environment is in better condition and more suitable for the young people.

Improvements since the last inspection

All recommendations from the last inspection have been acted upon, raising those outcome areas with outstanding features to 'outstanding'.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Having acted on recommendations from the last inspection, the measures taken by this home to maximise the health of the young people are now of a very high standard.

Medication records include a column to show what medicines have been returned

when children come back from a visit home. The nurse is encouraging staff to ensure that they fill this in accurately. She is arranging with other nurses in similar schools to establish a system that will give her supervision. Every week, the nurse evaluates very thoroughly how well staff in one or two of the units are storing, recording and administering medication. She then passes the evaluation forms to the head of care for her own monitoring. As a result, every aspect of health care for the young people is covered in an unusually thorough and appropriate way.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Visitors have to sign in before entering the building proper, and the school uses a particularly safe visitor identification system. The policies and procedures around personal care provide a good balance between the needs for privacy with the needs for safeguarding. Staff continue to speak respectfully about and around the young people.

Staff remain acutely aware of safeguarding issues and receive regular training. High staffing numbers and levels of supervision provide a further layer of protection.

The principal has introduced a new system of senior management team monitoring of the incident records, which provides a weekly opportunity to address any patterns emerging. It also allows them to identify and respond to changes needed to care plans as well as staff training needs. This means that the senior management team maintain an extremely up-to-date overview of the changing needs of young people and staff.

There is an audit of the management system on all health and safety risk assessments, which identifies possible problems and includes a column with advice on how to combat them. These suggestions are then entered into the development plan.

Staff take health and safety seriously, completing all necessary fire checks, including drills, at intervals specified by the fire officer. This officer also comes in to The Loddon to run fire training courses. Staff also discuss health and safety monitoring forms regularly in meetings will and deal with any issues that arise.

The bursar reviewed the generic risk assessments in October and issues identified are part of the 2009-2010 development plan. This means that management are able to plan for all necessary improvements, guaranteeing an even safer environment for the young people. An external company is now monitoring thermostats to ensure that water is provided at the correct temperature. Also, as a result of consultation with the fire officer and others, there are plans in place to put new electric closers on all bedroom doors. These measures, again, improve safety.

There is a thorough recruitment process for all staff, whether permanent or contracted, which ensures that they only employ people who are appropriate to work

with children. This process includes shadowing staff, so that everyone can feel secure that the candidate knows what to expect from the job.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Since transitions are complex for these young people, staff put a great deal of time and effort into helping parents secure the best possible placements on leaving The Loddon. They also have regular multi-disciplinary meetings attended by external people who are involved in the transition, to ensure that all concerned are aware of the latest developments in the behaviour of the young person. Staff ensure that the whole process is thoroughly documented.

The Loddon has completed a great deal of refurbishment in the main house over the past few months. This includes a small kitchen/dining area, a wet room, bathrooms and relaxation rooms. Staff have paid great attention to detail in terms of the most suitable materials and design. This means that students' needs are catered for at an excellent level, both generally and in relation to particular individuals.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.