

The Loddon School

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Merryl Wahogo
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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

This home provides education and residential care for up to 28 pupils, from 8 to 19 years of age who have severe and complex learning difficulties, associated with autism. All have communication difficulties, a number have additional impairments and all exhibit challenging behaviour to varying degrees. The home operates as a charitable trust, and being a school as well, it is approved by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. Some of the children are accommodated in the main house, which is organised into three residential units. There are also four additional units, including a two-bedroom lodge and a six-bedded unit designed for older pupils. The home 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 unannounced interim inspection covering the staying safe outcome area and recommendations made at the last inspection. These include one in the economic well-being outcome area. The school has improved its staffing levels significantly. Staff demonstrate exceptional commitment and managed to maintain supervision levels for the young people throughout the disruption caused by snow. They continue to be Vigilant in keeping the young people safe and there is no evidence to suggest that standards have dropped since the key inspection. Although the snow has delayed senior management's ability to respond to all recommendations made by the fire service, this work is clearly in hand.

Improvements since the last inspection

Senior management have put in place temporary arrangements to improve the privacy of young people, whilst they are in their bedrooms. They are also close to finalising a choice of new bedroom doors and ordering these. Equally, the completion of work to the roof now ensures that bird excrement is not a problem.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Senior staff report that all staff made a magnificent effort to come in to work despite the deep snow. The management facilitated this, for example by providing temporary accommodation in nearby staff houses. This meant that they kept young people safe at all times by maintaining supervision levels.

Staff have improved the privacy of young people when they are in their bedrooms, by fixing a rotating cover to the viewing panes. This is a temporary measure whilst senior management decide on the best possible replacements for bedroom doors, to satisfy privacy and health and safety requirements. Staff are very clear, both about policies on privacy and their role in ensuring it.

Far from there having been any complaints since the last inspection, staff have received a number of compliments from parents.

Excellent induction procedures and clear child protection policies, support staff extremely well. The whole range of staff, from most junior to most senior, are clear about their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children and act accordingly.

Staffing levels and, therefore, supervision levels, are so high that it is not possible for young people to target others. For the same reasons and also because of good security measures, no young people have absconded in recent months.

Staff training in relation to behaviour management continues to be of a very high standard. In addition, senior staff scrutinise incident sheets to ensure that staff not only practise correct behaviour management, but record it accurately. As a result young people are as calm and contented as possible.

The fire officer visited in December and made a number of recommendations for improvements. Senior management have been able to address some of the recommendations already. The disruption caused by the recent snow, however, has delayed their ability to respond to others. Even quite new staff have a good understanding of fire safety procedures and have experienced fire drills.

Senior management have worked hard to recruit staff such that even with a larger complement of staff than previously, there are now only two vacancies. Recruitment procedures are thorough, with all staff involved having had training in safer recruiting methods. This means that parents can be confident that their children are being looked after safely.

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 good.

Senior management have had the summer house completely re-floored and made more open. This gives the young people an extra space in which to relax in the gardens. Additionally, roofing work has ensured that an area of ground, close to one entrance, is now clear of bird excrement. There is no evidence that standards have dropped in this outcome area.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.