

The Marchant-Holliday School

Marchant Holliday School, North Cheriton, TEMPLECOMBE, Somerset, BA8 0AH

Inspection dates	17/10/2014	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Outcomes for residential pupils	Good	2
Quality of residential provision and care	Good	2
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Adequate	3

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- This residential special school has appointed a new Head of Care since the last inspection in July 2013. The Head of Care has extensive experience and suitable qualifications. He has worked hard to establish a positive rapport with the staff team and is highly regarded among the senior management team. His focus has been to understand the diverse needs of the residential pupils. He has securely introduced a number of positive changes and has a detailed development plan in place.
- A particular strength of this service is the excellent relationships that exist between staff and residential pupils. Carers are nurturing and positive and respond well to individual needs. As a result, residential pupils really enjoy their experience of boarding. They particularly enjoy the wide range of activities that are available to them.
- Residential pupils say they feel safe at this school. They feel staff understand them and they do not experience bullying in the way many have in previous educational settings. Residential pupils feel proud of the progress they make, particularly in improving their behaviour and confidence in a range of social settings. Parents too feel their child is safe and are impressed with noticeable improvements in their behaviour during visits home. One parent said; 'even my neighbours have commented on how much my son's behaviour has improved in the short time he has been attending this school'.
- While many improvements are taking place, some are not yet embedded. For example, management processes and oversight of recording are not consistently good. External monitoring, while improving, lacks robust evaluation to drive forward further improvements. The senior management are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and are working well together. They share a commitment to make further improvements in the best interests of the pupils.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

Information about this inspection

This inspection took place over three days and was announced on the morning of day one. Two inspectors were present for two days and one inspector on the final day, during which formal feedback was given to the senior management team.

Inspectors, interviewed the majority of residential staff, extensively consulted residential pupils and spoke with parents and governors. Meals were taken with pupils and a wide range of after school activities were observed.

Records and documentation were extensively examined. Daily procedures and routines were observed and residential accommodation was inspected.

Inspection team

Norma Welsby

Lead social care inspector

Janet Fraser

Social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

The Marchant-Holliday School is an approved independent charitable residential special school. It is managed by a board of governors, who are also trustees, and by a senior management team. The school is situated in rural surroundings three miles from the nearest town, Wincanton.

The Marchant-Holliday School provides residential and day education. The school provides residential accommodation for up to a maximum of 32 residential pupils. It is a boys' school for pupils aged five to 13 years old who have social, emotional and behaviour difficulties with additional complex needs. At the time of this inspection there were 21 residential pupils, plus 16 day pupils. Residential pupils are accommodated in one of two boarding houses which are split into accommodating younger and older pupils. All residential pupils go home at weekends at least once every two weeks. Many are now weekly boarders and the school also offers flexi boarding.

The residential provision was last inspected on 11 July 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- ensure individual risk assessments are robust and include a detailed rationale for continuing to use bedroom door alarms
- ensure that the quality of staff training is evaluated and staff performance following such training is monitored
- ensure the independent visitor reports continue to develop so that they can be used effectively to support the school's improvement agenda

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Good

Outcomes for residential pupils are good. They enjoy their experience of boarding and make very good progress, often within a short time of arriving at the school. For example, throughout this inspection behaviour was judged to be excellent.

The residential pupil population has changed significantly during this academic year. Many older pupils have left, some having returned to mainstream school and many younger children have joined the school. Some of the boarders are as young as eight years of age. They benefit from a nurturing approach and established daily routines. They are very motivated to participate in the school's incentive scheme as it is meaningful to them. This means that their behaviour improves significantly.

Residential pupils enjoy really positive relationships with staff. They learn to form and sustain positive attachments to their peers. They also learn how to be more tolerant and respectful of differences and each others rights as boarders. As a result, pupils feel safe, valued and more confident about themselves.

A range of opportunities are in place for residential pupils to have their say and influence their residential experience. There is an active school council and weekly one to one key worker sessions. Parents too feel that they are consulted.

Pupils benefit from being part of a culture that embraces healthy lifestyles. There are regular opportunities to participate in a wide range of physical exercise. The school has extensive grounds, outdoor play equipment and a quarry garden that young people love to play in. Residential pupils also enjoy many structured activities such as football games, belly rounders (their own invention), swimming, horse riding and scouting. The Head of Care, while happy with the range of activities pupils have, wants to improve opportunities for a wider variety of community based activities. This is important in working towards transition back to mainstream school and living full time at home again.

Quality of residential provision and care

Good

The quality of the boarding provision is good. The residential experience gives pupils an opportunity to feel safe and understood. A significant factor in this is the quality of the relationships that exist between residential staff and pupils.

There are effective links between residential and teaching staff. The senior management team are keen to develop a mutually reciprocal approach that meets the holistic needs of pupils and supports their development. Recent developments in the role of key workers have provided more structured opportunities for individual support which better prepares pupils to learn and achieve. The key worker role is also significant in helping new residential pupils settle. Their knowledge and relationship with pupils and parents ensure that support can be tailored to meet individual needs.

Residential staff are knowledgeable about the needs of individual pupils, including their home circumstances. They are particularly attentive to identifying where additional support is needed. Staff are effective at keeping in regular contact with parents themselves and facilitate residential pupils' contact home. One new parent said; 'I am really impressed; great experience with communication so far with the staff. Really impressed with my son's key worker. Weekly reports are very good. I cannot fault the school and we have all been given so much support'.

All pupils have a care plan, with identified targets. Some files contain informative and personalised information. However files are not consistently of a good standard. Some files do not contain the most recent information and filing is disorganised. This makes information difficult to access easily. Residential pupils have memory files which are really positive and meaningful records for them to have when they leave. Good support processes are also in place for pupils due to leave the school. Staff work effectively with the placing authority and families.

In addition to key workers, residential pupils also have a special relationship with the school nurse. She is responsible for managing medication, writing health care plans and ensuring pupils have access to a range of health care services. A school counsellor visits weekly to support individual pupils. He also works alongside staff to establish behaviour management plans. Where needed, additional specialist support is secured through child and adolescent mental health services and other agencies.

The quality of the school's catering arrangements are good. Evening meals are particularly sociable occasions. Staff eat with pupils, modelling a family experience and engage pupils very effectively in conversation. While meals are healthy, there are ways to further improve these which the Head of Care has plans to do. For example, pupils will have greater opportunities to eat more fruit, presented in ways that appeal more to children, such as sliced fruit and smoothies.

The residential accommodation is good. Residential pupils mostly enjoy single bedrooms, some have an ensuite. However, some pupils chose to share a bedroom with particular friends. While some bedrooms are personalised, others are bland and unappealing. Plans are in place for key workers to support pupils to individualise their rooms more, as they wish to. The Head of Care has also identified some of the living areas as needing to be made more homely and comfortable for relaxation.

Residential pupils' safety

Good

Safeguarding within this school is good. The school gives high priority to pupil safety. Staff are very mindful of the vulnerability of pupils and their responsibility to keep them safe. All staff receive initial and refresher training in safeguarding awareness and the procedures to follow in the event of an incident. Staff know who are the designated safeguarding staff on the team. Appropriate referrals are made when incidents occur, although the school feels they do not always receive a timely response from the local authority.

While pupils do report that occasional bullying has occurred they feel that staff deal with it effectively. They say they feel safe and, as well as having regular contact with parents, can talk to their key worker, the independent visitor and the school counsellor.

Residential pupils are able to enjoy a wide range of age appropriate activities. These activities are risk assessed and supervised. A school governor gave a good example of the importance of pupils having opportunities and experiences equal to their peers. This was at Christmas when pupils attended church for the Christingle Service and enjoyed holding a lighted Christingle candle.

The approach to managing behaviour is very positive, being incentive based. Pupils engage well with it because it is meaningful to them and gives them opportunities to be successful. They enjoy earning tokens and having opportunities to choose preferred activities and spend their tokens at the end of the week. Sanctions are low level and most often relate to the loss of some tokens. Young people generally feel this is a fair system. They have the opportunity to have their particular views recorded at the time. In July all staff attended a two day accredited training course on positive intervention. Staff feel that this training has improved the effectiveness of their de-escalation techniques. Physical interventions outside of school are minimal and low level, with evidence of these have decreased since this training was provided. Not all records are detailed.

For example they do not always identify what de-escalation techniques were used. Nor do they include evidence of reflective learning. One recent record indicated that a restraint technique recommended during previous training was used, which is not consistent with recent training expectations. The Head of Care advised he intends to improve this area of recording and management oversight. There have been no incidents of residential pupils going missing for three years.

The environment is safe and secure. Following concerns raised at the last inspection, the school's outdoor swimming pool has undergone an extensive upgrade. As well as a Perspex cover, eight individual and lockable changing rooms have been constructed. It is planned that all work will be complete and the pool back into use for the start of the next half term. The school continues to use bedroom door alarms and listening devices. Parents and placing authorities have been consulted and are in favour of these being maintained. Staff feel that due to the young age of many of the residential pupils, this approach feels reasonable as it ensures that night staff can attend to a child when they have a bad dream or need assistance. They also feel that this system helps safeguard young people from someone else entering their bedroom during the night. While the school has carried out individual risk assessments, not all are detailed enough to evidence the rationale for their continuing use. The Head of Care intends to make these more robust.

There are safe and robust procedures in place to recruit new staff. Visitors are also vetted and supervised. These measures help prevent unsuitable people from having the opportunity to harm vulnerable pupils.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Adequate

The leadership and management of the school is adequate. Since the last full inspection a new Head of Care has been appointed. Several improvements have already taken place, others are being introduced but have yet to be embedded. For example, residential staff communication has been improved by the Head of Care introducing a full team meeting every week. Formal and regular supervision has been established. Appraisals are just being put in place. These opportunities better support staff to reflect on how their practices can be improved to benefit residential pupils.

The culture and ethos of the school is positive and aspirational for both pupils and staff. The school's aim is to enable pupils to return to mainstream education and their families. Staff are encouraged to pursue a range of qualifications and have opportunities to work across care and academic areas.

Staffing levels are good, providing additional staffing at weekends to enable a broad range of off site activities such as trips to Bath, animal farms, museums and sporting events. Of the nine staff, seven have a level 3 qualification in caring for children and young people, and the two remaining staff are currently part way to achieving their qualification.

The school is seeking to appoint administrative support for the senior management team. This is a positive development. The Head of Care is confident that this will support further improvements, including better organisation of pupil's records and will support more effective management processes.

The senior management team has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and is committed to making further improvements to benefit residential pupils. They have acted on the shortfalls identified during the last inspection and there is a detailed development plan in place. While independent visitor's report have improved the school acknowledges that these could be more rigorous to support the school's improvement agenda.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	123920
Social care unique reference number	SC033089
DfE registration number	933/6089

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	
Number of boarders on roll	
Gender of boarders	
Age range of boarders	
Headteacher	Mr T J Kitts
Date of previous boarding inspection	11/07/2013
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