

Nunnykirk Centre for Dyslexia

Nunnykirk Centre for Dyslexia, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 4PB

Inspection dates	26/01/2016 to 01/02/2016	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Good	2
The quality of care and support	Good	2
How well children and young people are protected	Good	2
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

Young people make good progress as a direct result of their residential experience. Relationships with staff are positive and based on mutual respect. Peer relationships are also good, which enhances young people's opportunities to socialise and make friendships that carry on outside of school. Young people are very happy at school and during their residential stays, and all young people rated the school as a very good place to be.

Young people achieve academically and their emotional well-being is paramount. They are supported by a skilled, experienced staff team that encompasses both school and residential staff. This joint working provides a seamless, consistent approach that enhances very good care and support. Young people learn a range of independent skills that prepare them for later life.

Staff manage behaviour positively and young people are safe. Consultation, and the inclusion of young people, and parents, is purposeful and their views, wishes and feelings are fully taken into account. Activities are varied and introduce young people to a range of new experiences. This significantly increases their self-esteem and confidence.

Leadership and management are highly effective. The quality of monitoring is very good. Additional operational reviews, internal systems audits and quality assurance exercises undertaken by the new headteacher are leading to a wealth of improvements and the school's overall positive development.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

Provide ongoing, bespoke development and training plans for all residential staff.

Establish a written development plan to manage the upkeep of the school, including its décor and overall cleanliness.

Information about this inspection

Ofsted gave the school three hours' notice of the inspection of its residential provision. The inspector had discussions with young people, the headteacher, key school staff, residential staff, a governor, parents; analysed written surveys received from children, staff and parents provided by the headmaster; examined the school's policies, records and children's case files; and observed life in the residential unit at various times of the day, including mealtimes.

Inspection team

Debbie White

Lead social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

Nunnykirk Centre for Dyslexia is a non-maintained residential special school providing a specialised service for pupils aged between 9 and 18 years old with dyslexia and associated learning difficulties. The school is located approximately 10 miles from Morpeth and is a large country house which has been converted for its present purpose. The grounds cover 12 acres, and facilities include a tennis court, playing field, garden and outdoor play areas, including a go-kart track. The school admits pupils on a day basis, as well as providing accommodation, currently for nine boarders. The boarding provision was last inspected in December 2013.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

Young people experience very positive relationships with staff that are based on mutual respect. Staff are skilled in engaging young people and developing a meaningful rapport that forms trusting bonds. This results in young people feeling relaxed and emotionally secure. A young person commented, 'I get along with all the staff, you can talk to them and they help you.' Young people said they can talk to staff 'about anything' and they would talk to staff if they are worried or concerned about anything. A parent said, 'My son is doing brilliantly and he gets along really well with staff, particularly (name).'

Peer relationships are meaningful, and friendships established in school have flourished. A particular strength is older young people mentoring younger children who are new to the school, and residential overnight stays. This invaluable support and guidance is a credit to the young people, and enhances positive experiences in school.

Young people learn a range of new skills that are reflected in the ongoing progress they make. Young people who have previously experienced isolation at school are thriving, which significantly boosts their confidence and self-esteem. A wide range of activities introduces new and exciting opportunities, and links to their overall educational outcomes and personal development. For example, staff supported a young person who expressed an interest in swimming and coaching to attend an external week-long residential course to pursue his aspirations. His parent said, 'I have the school to thank for my child being more confident. Staff support what he wants to do and are there for him.'

Young people are very positive about life in school. They are regularly consulted and their views, wishes and feelings are listened to and taken into account. This values young people and promotes their rights. Their strengths and achievements are acknowledged and celebrated, which further develops feelings of self-worth. Young people feel safe and know staff genuinely care about them and their well-being. This gives young people a high level of awareness of their individuality, their strengths and their uniqueness. All young people know they are an important part of the school community.

The quality of care and support

Good

Recent changes in the school's leadership have strengthened how young people's needs are met. Good relationships between the school and residential staff have been further cemented to provide well-organised, consistent support and continuity. A residential staff member said, 'We are much more involved now and attend more meetings and handovers. It's much better.' School staff work in the evenings to offer young people additional educational support with their homework, and they are also involved in evening activities. This shows young people that all staff at the school are supportive of them, and their interests and aspirations.

Young people are healthy, and their health and well-being needs are very well met.

There are robust procedures in place for the safe administration of medication and care of young people who are unwell. Menus are varied and nutritious, and mealtimes are social occasions. Young people learn about healthy living and are supported to understand the sometimes complex issues around puberty and growing up. A parent said, 'Boarding is a wonderful experience and my child is very healthy. He takes more responsibility looking after himself.'

Guidance and pastoral support is a vital element of the school's ethos. Young people are comfortable talking about their feelings and they actively respond to the warm, caring attitudes of staff. Young people know and understand that staff have a genuine interest in their welfare and well-being. This is reflected in young people being able to talk about sometimes difficult problems with staff who they trust. This reassures young people. A young person said, 'I can talk to (name) about anything and they understand me.' Staff fully understand and embrace the importance of seeking young people's views. They strive to involve young people in a range of consultation experiences that include regular group meetings, one-to-one discussions and completing questionnaires. Their thoughts and ideas are respected, and have a direct impact on the care they receive and the school's operation. This collaborative way of working fully includes young people in important decision making. A young person said, 'Yeh I get asked things about being here, I get asked all the time.'

Staff are equally supportive of parents and others significant to the young people. All feedback gained from parents at this inspection is very positive and complimentary. Young people and parents are happy with contact arrangements during overnight stays. This is reassuring for young people who spend time living away from the family home. A parent said, 'It was hard for me at the start when my child started to stay over, but the staff were great and didn't mind me phoning. I feel I can ring anytime, they are always very supportive.'

The school is a historic listed building. It provides an interesting environment that is appealing to young people. It retains many original features that include a full-size pipe organ, used by the young people, and a large underground cellar that is utilised for activities and a 'youth club' relaxation area. However, there are some challenges in maintaining the building, and the upkeep of the internal presentation and décor. Some of the residential areas have paintwork and walls that are damaged and the bedrooms are quite sparse and not of a homely, domestic appearance. The décor is dated and not child-friendly and some areas of the school are not kept adequately clean.

While the physical environment does not impact significantly on young people or their care, failure to address the overall appearance of the school could potentially lead to further decline in the standard of the living facilities.

How well children and young people are protected

Good

Young people are safe, and stay in a safe environment. The protection of young people is seen as paramount, and any protection or welfare concerns are addressed without delay. Staff know the safeguarding procedures and receive regular child protection training. A staff member said,

We have child protection training and I know who to report concerns to. Senior staff advise us, and if I needed help I would ring the on-call social services number.

The school has good links with local safeguarding officers who offer support and advice upon request. Staff have a good knowledge and awareness of the signs of possible exploitation, and all young people are taught about e-safety and how to safely access social media. Young people know who to talk to if they feel unsafe and are helped to understand the importance of keeping themselves safe. There are no concerns regarding bullying, and young people going missing is a very rare event. Staff are trained in countering bullying strategies, and young people report that bullying is not a problem. The school have measures in place to protect missing young people that include a locality risk assessment. This takes into account the risks associated with the school's rural location.

Young people's behaviour is exemplary, and staff manage behaviours positively by guiding, encouraging, praising and rewarding young people. This skilled approach to managing behaviour empowers them and provides them with a range of positive life skills they take with them to adulthood. There have been no complaints since the last inspection. Young people know how to complain and feel their complaints would be taken seriously. A young person said, 'What can be better? Nothing, you can't improve it, it's pretty much perfect here.'

The headteacher oversees all areas of health and safety and is supported by nominated staff who have responsibility for certain safety areas such as fire safety, checks on the utilities and the control of hazardous substances. The environment is regularly checked for hazards, and a range of health and safety risk assessments are regularly monitored to keep young people, staff and visitors safe.

No new staff, bar the headteacher, have been employed since the last inspection. Records are kept of all staff employed at the home. These include systems to ensure that safety checks are up to date.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers Good

Leadership and management outcomes are very good. The headteacher is a committed, effective leader who values his staff, and fully utilises their strengths and aspirations. Key staff roles and responsibilities are clear, which ensures the smooth running of the school. Staff feel very well supported and included, and have been instrumental in supporting the headteacher and the positive changes he has made since he took up his post in September 2015. A parent governor said, 'I feel confident that all the changes being made will make the school a much better place.'

Team building is a strength, as is good communication. School and residential staff work cohesively to promote good outcomes for young people. This co-operative style of working has had a positive impact on all young people, progressing from their starting point and since the last inspection. Developing residential services is a key element of the headteacher's vision for the school. This is supported by a comprehensive written review of the current services offered and what the school needs to do to improve. This proactive stance to better the outcomes further for young people is testament to the school's drive towards improvement.

Staff are usefully deployed to meet the needs of the young people. They have the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to carry out their role. They are very well supported through both formal and informal supervision. This ensures staff maintain good competency skills and continue to develop their day-to-day practice.

Training records show that most staff are up to date with their statutory training. Training updates are booked for those staff who need refresher courses. One houseparent has a relevant level 3 qualification in caring for children and young people, and the second houseparent, new to the post, is in the process of being registered. There are induction plans for new starters, but little in the way of training and development planning for residential staff once they have attained their level 3 qualification. This potentially impedes future learning and development.

Monitoring is robust and meaningful. All monitoring, including the school's internal monitoring systems, is comprehensive. It is run alongside developmental action plans that are prescriptive and achievable. Young people, parents and staff have been asked about how they feel the school could be better, which demonstrates high levels of consultation and inclusion. The independent visitor knows the school and young people very well, and her reports are informative. The visitor said, 'The boarders enjoy being here. They have friends and they stay in a very caring atmosphere. Parental feedback is always positive. Coming here gives young people confidence and the structure they need.'

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number

Social care unique reference number

SC041408

DfE registration number

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

Residential Special School

Number of boarders on roll

30

Gender of boarders

Mixed

Age range of boarders

9 to18

Headteacher

Mr Barry Frost

Date of previous boarding inspection

11/11/2014

Telephone number

01670 772685

Email address

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