

LVS Oxford

Spring Hill Road, Begbroke, Oxfordshire, OX5 1RX

Inspection dates	12/01/2016 to 14/01/2016	
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

- The new leaders have quickly formed a cohesive team providing staff with good direction and a shared vision. Effective team work across the school, and with external agencies, supports and promotes the health and well-being of young people.
- The competent and well-trained staff team support young people to have a positive and enjoyable time in boarding. They are establishing warm relationships with them. Staff are enabling young people to better manage their own behaviour. This is beginning to make a difference to their lives and that of their families and carers.
- Staff effectively promote the safety of children and young people. They have a sound understanding of the range of safeguarding issues and their role in reporting any concerns. Staff work hard to ensure that the children and young people they care for develop an age-appropriate understanding of how to keep themselves safe, particularly when on-line.
- Staff communication with parents and carers is a strength of the residential provision, some describing it as 'brilliant'.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools

- Standard 20.1 The governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation

responsible for carrying on the school arrange for one of their number, or a representative who is independent of the management of the school, to visit the school six times, spread evenly, over the course of a school year and complete a written report on the conduct of the school. Where the school has an individual proprietor, that person may carry out such visits personally if they are not also the head teacher (or school equivalent).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Review the communal accommodation to determine if the space annexed as a classroom should be returned to residential use.
- Develop young people's individual care plans to include specific targets to promote their progress and development.
- Improve the audit trails of the management of safeguarding concerns and complaints.
- Improve the quality of management reports to the trustees, in respect of safeguarding and behaviour management in particular.
- Further develop risk assessments to ensure that risks that young people may expose themselves to are identified alongside the strategies to minimise these risks.

Information about this inspection

Ofsted carried out this inspection with three hours' notice. Inspection activities included: observation of boarding practice over two evenings; informal discussions with young people during shared meals and during boarding time; meetings and discussions with the head of centre, the acting head of care, residential staff, ancillary staff, the site manager, the catering manager, the head of Human Resources and the Director of Special Educational Needs (SEN) for the provider; contact with the local statutory safeguarding authority; a tour of the accommodation; and scrutiny of the wide ranging documentation about boarding. The views of parents and carers were sought during the inspection, as well as their contributions on Parent View. There were no pupil or staff responses to Ofsted's point in time surveys.

Inspection team

Maire Atherton

Lead social care inspector

Information about this school

LVS Oxford is an independent special school that incorporates day and residential provision for young people between 11 and 18 years of age who have a diagnosis on the autistic spectrum.

The residential provision offers weekly or flexi-boarding Monday to Thursday night. The school is situated in a rural location on the outskirts of Oxford. It may currently accommodate 15 young people on a residential basis and 35 as day students.

The proprietors are the Licensed Trade Charity. The school was first registered in June 2014 and opened in September 2014. This is the first inspection of the residential provision. There were eight young people using the residential provision at the time of this visit.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Young people have already begun to make personal progress in the short time they have been boarding, particularly socially and in building their self-esteem and confidence. Parents and carers say: 'X is not so anxious, they have worked really well with X, talking through the anxiety'; 'X (a different child) has come on in leaps and bounds'; 'X is waiting for social cues and learning to read emotion, asking "Are you cross about that?", this is new thinking for X'. The management team have identified that formal monitoring of this progress is an area for development.

Staff have a good understanding of the very differing needs of young people who have a diagnosis on the autistic spectrum. They tailor the care they provide according to young people's individual needs and abilities. Staff engage effectively with young people and are building warm, nurturing relationships with them. A carer described the staff as, 'Amazing: they are appreciative of X's quirky habits and make living there thoroughly agreeable. X can't wait to get to school.'

Young people generally feel safe and are safe as a result of the vigilance and diligence of the staff team. The staff make themselves readily available to young people. Staff communicate effectively with young people so that they have the information to understand the decision making process for things they disagree with. Staff understand behaviour as a form of communication and encourage young people to express any discontent appropriately. Parents and carers speak positively about the ways in which staff promote positive behaviour. One said, 'Staff are very caring, they talk to students positively and handle things fairly. They recognise when punishment is appropriate or not and students are given the chance to put things right. X is able to self-calm more quickly.'

The residential provision is well organised with the focus on the well-being of young people. This informs the deployment, support and training needs of staff and ensures that children and young people are cared for by a competent and caring staff team. One young person described the staff as 'second mums'.

The small nature of the residential provision means that young people have ample opportunity to express their views informally. Staff share these at daily handovers and regular team meetings. Formal systems for gaining young people's views are being developed.

Staff effectively implement the arrangements for the promotion of health and personal development. Young people gain age-appropriate life and independence skills. Parent and carer comments included; 'When X first went there you wouldn't have got X out, now he goes shopping and takes the lead'; 'Since being in residential we have noticed he can share a meal, demonstrating that he is thinking about other people. It's a huge step for X to be that socially aware.'

Young people generally enjoy boarding, particularly the social aspect. A carer said, 'X is

learning from staff and other pupils; X wants to have friends.' The programme of activities is increasing, based on the expressed wishes and interests of the young people alongside the skills and hobbies of staff.

The quality of care and support

The school opened in September 2014 but the take up of the boarding provision was very limited until September 2015. In one full term staff have got to know the young people well. The staffing levels are sufficient to provide young people with opportunities for one-to-one interaction with staff, which they appreciate. They are also benefiting from the involvement of teaching staff in the residential provision, providing greater diversity for young people. The role of the independent visitor is not yet established, although one has been appointed and a visit is scheduled. External help lines for young people are well-advertised, providing them with easy access to this information if required.

The head of care left in December 2015 and the management team made an interim appointment to the role from within the existing team. This served to provide continuity. The head of centre is establishing a more formal basis to the good team work, for example multi-disciplinary case conferences are being held weekly from the start of this term.

Staff are sensitive to the individual needs of young people and respond appropriately. They effectively tailor their engagement with young people according to their needs and abilities. Young people do not always show each other the same respect, and staff are working with them on this.

The residential accommodation is of good standard. All young people have their own lockable bedrooms, boys on the ground floor and girls on the first floor. There is one communal lounge on each floor. A change in the configuration of the education provision resulted in the loss of one of the ground floor residential communal rooms. As a result arts and crafts are done at a table in the hallway which can be difficult and was observed to create some tension around the office door area. The dining hall may be used in the evening for activities, music making for example.

The range of activities offered to young people is being developed. Swimming and shopping off-site are regular activities. The acting head of care is researching local youth clubs so that young people can attend the one that suits their interests best. On-site activities are being extended by teachers using their hobbies and interests such as modern languages, music and healthy living which are new this term. Young people also enjoy playing board games or on a games console. The management team have recognised that on-site outdoor activities during the winter months are very limited and are working to improve this.

As this is a part-time residential provision parents retain overall responsibility for the healthcare arrangements for their children. A well-qualified part-time school nurse works

effectively with staff to encourage and support young people to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles. This is underpinned by working with young people to help their understanding of the component parts of a healthy lifestyle and how to become aware of and overcome any presenting barriers. This includes accessing external services when necessary. Staff implement fully the robust systems for the management and administration of medication, thus ensuring young people receive the right medication at the right time.

Young people enjoy the good standard of food provided. It is balanced, varied and individual needs are catered for sensitively. Staff strive to make meal-times social occasions and encourage young people to make plans or reflect on the day, often successfully. Young people views on menus are sought and implemented. Themed evenings regularly take place and are enjoyed; a celebration of the Chinese New Year was being planned at the time of this visit.

The written plans for young people are a work in progress. These were started by the previous head of care but not all contain the level of detail required. It is unclear if young people have been involved in developing these plans as some were unaware of them. The acting head of care has ideas about further developing these plans linked to their education targets and actively involving young people.

The acting head of care is developing formal systems for gaining the views of young people, for example a comments/suggestions box has very recently been introduced. It is evident that views expressed by young people in conversation with staff are acted on, for example suggestions for activities such as going to a climbing wall.

Flexible and part-time boarding means children and young people see their family and carers every weekend at a minimum. Parents and carers are generally very happy with the frequency and quality of contact with residential staff. They say that there is no issue with contact with young people if using the internet. Parents express some frustration at the lack of landline in the residential accommodation because the mobile signal is very variable. The management team are taking steps to address this and a landline is due to be installed in the near future.

How well children and young people are protected

Young people report feeling safe most of the time. They recognise that when they do not feel safe it is primarily due to their view of themselves and their past experiences rather than external causes. Young people confidently approach staff to express their views, including any concerns or worries. Young people trust staff to listen to them and take action in response where necessary, but do not always feel heard when their wishes cannot be met. Staff do not routinely record expressions of concern as a complaint. This misses an opportunity to analyse and identify any trends or patterns in young people's expressions of concern.

The designated safeguarding leads and deputies have are experienced in and have a sound knowledge of their roles and responsibilities and implement them effectively. Those new in post are booked to attend the host authority training to complement

training they have had with other local authorities. All staff are well versed in the action to take if they have any worries or concerns about a young person. A strength of the safeguarding ethos in the school is management encouragement to report even minor worries, such as a simple 'something's not quite right'. The management team make appropriate referrals to local authority safeguarding personnel and are establishing a good working relationship. They engage positively in the best interests of young people, inviting an independent safeguarding audit for example. There are good systems for the management of any allegations against staff. The deputy, in post one week at the time of this visit, is working on improving the safeguarding recording systems, for example to ensure there is a comprehensive chronology from beginning to end. Currently all the required information is available but there is not a secure audit trail in every case. Safeguarding policy and practice, including behaviour management, is routinely reported to trustees to enable their monitoring. However the reports provide very limited analysis, for example the number of incidents but not the number of young people involved. Although the numbers are low, this does not support meaningful monitoring or evaluation.

Staff know the action to take should a young person leave the site without permission. Their response to such a situation is prompt so that young people do not go missing. The management team are taking action to minimise the site issues and robust evaluation of all other aspects will inform specific and general next steps.

Staff have a good knowledge of the individual vulnerabilities and risks of the young people. A small staff team working with a small group of young people ensures that any risks are managed well and consistently on a day-to-day basis. Written risk assessments are in place but are not sufficiently developed re individual young people.

Staff promote positive behaviour. They emphasise affirmation of good behaviour and use distraction and diversion to good effect. A parent noted a difference at home too: 'X doesn't lose it quite so much.' Staff report that the clarity of the new headteacher in respect of school rules has led to improvements in the behaviour of young people. The management team are introducing a reward scheme to consolidate this approach. Physical intervention is used very infrequently in the residential provision and is decreasing during the school day. There are good systems for monitoring and evaluating behaviour management measures, but evidence of learning from incidents through discussion with staff and young people after an incident is not embedded in practice. The head of centre takes a strong lead in promoting e-safety and is taking purposeful measures to keep young people safe, educate them about keeping themselves safe and using external agencies appropriately. Staff are pro-active in the management of bullying or behaviour that may be interpreted as bullying. They challenge young people promptly and work to educate them on how personal comments they make may be perceived and received. Staff carefully balance this with an awareness of the needs and understanding of young people on the autistic spectrum.

The application of the staff recruitment policy and procedures is robust, ensuring suitable people are employed to work in the school. There are sound procedures to ensure that risk assessments are undertaken and strategies to reduce any identified risk are applied where necessary.

The site manager takes pride in ensuring that all systems for maintaining health and

safety on the school site are routinely implemented to a good standard. There has not yet been a fire drill during sleeping hours but this is planned.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Since the opening of the school in September 2014 there have been significant changes in the management team. A new head started in September 2015, the previous head of care resigned in December 2015, an interim appointment to the role took over in the same month and the successful candidate for the new post of deputy commenced in January 2016. All are suitably experienced for their respective roles and residential staff express confidence in their leadership and 'clear vision which is communicated well'.

Boarding has only been fully established since September 2015. The ethos of the school is to promote the independence of the young people. Staff are working with them towards this and the development of formal plans to support the work is scheduled. Parents and carers say can see the difference it is making to their children's lives as they grow in confidence and test newly acquired skills.

The core group of residential staff has also seen some turnover in the first term of this academic year. Staffing levels are sufficient as some teaching staff participate in the duty rota. In addition two new appointments have been made to the residential staff team. Staff are building good relationships with the young people. Staff are alert to potential tensions between young people and ensure appropriate deployment to minimise such occurrences and take effective action should the need arise.

Effective frequent communication has enabled the staff team to informally monitor the quality of care and adapt their practice in the light of their shared observations, complaints and feedback. The new management team are developing formal monitoring systems to inform their development plan.

Trustees for the school and the Director of SEN visit the school regularly. However there were no written reports available for the autumn term 2015. This has been recognised and action taken to ensure that reports will be made available from this half term as required. The Director of SEN audited the residential provision against a number of the national minimum standards in November 2015 and devised an action plan as a result. The acting head of care is moving forward with this.

Induction of new staff is sound. Staff report they are well supported by regular supervision, appraisals, daily handovers and team meetings. Where there are concerns about aptitude for the role staff are appropriately challenged and fully supported to explore how to address the concerns and move forward. The detail of the recording of these has been identified as an area for improvement by the leadership team and work on this has begun. The acting head of care is benefiting from mentoring by the head of care from another of the provider's residential special schools. Staff receive suitable core training which is supplemented by courses attended in response to the identified needs of children and young people. Training is shared across the provider's school sites. This gives staff opportunities to attend a range of training in good time. The policies and procedures, which are being systematically reviewed, provide staff with a clear

framework for their respective roles.

The staff teams work well and flexibly together across disciplines. The therapy team liaise with the residential staff to share strategies for effective communication and calming. Teaching staff support the residential provision and vice versa. The head of centre is skilled at encouraging staff to identify their strengths as individuals and utilise them for the benefit of the young people.

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	141208
Social care unique reference number	SC479872
DfE registration number	931/6015

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	8
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	11 to19
Headteacher	Louisa Allison-Bergin
Date of previous boarding inspection	First inspection
Telephone number	01865 595170
Email address	enquiries@lvs-oxford.org.uk

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