

# Woodeaton Manor School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Christopher Garrett
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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	30 May 2007

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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 outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## 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**

Woodeaton Manor provides education for 52 children and young people aged 11 to 16 years old, of mixed gender. It is designated as a special school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social disorders (BESD), but has a particular focus on those with emotional and social difficulties. The vast majority of pupils have autistic spectrum disorders. The school became a foundation school on 1 April 2008. The premises consist of a number of Grade II listed buildings, which include an 18th century manor house, in extensive private grounds. The pupils live within the boundaries of Oxfordshire though this means that some have to travel quite a distance each day.

Woodeaton Manor provides flexible boarding arrangements for up to four nights a week for up to 10 pupils. A team of residential staff take responsibility for these pupils after the school day until the following morning.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this visit was to conduct an announced, full inspection of the residential provision. During the inspection all of the key national minimum standards for residential special schools were inspected. A standard in the outcome group organisation, relating to staff training was also inspected.

The school provides an outstanding standard of care for the young people. They are looked after by a qualified, competent and committed care team who work well together. The headteacher provides excellent management oversight of the school, which ensures that the young people are kept safe and that at high standards are achieved. The school has been committed to ensuring that the residential provision is maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair. An extensive programme of renovation and refurbishment has been undertaken. During this period the provision has had to close. The school has taken positive steps to ensure that the care staff's professional development has been maintained. Care staff have taken on additional training and responsibilities that have a positive impact and the safety and welfare of the young people. The school provides a safe secure and nurturing environment for the young people. The school is a reflective service and makes good use of the inspection process and its quality assurance systems to review and improve its practice. A significant aspect of the school is its commitment to listening and consulting with the young people. This enables the young people to affect change and make the views and feelings known. Young people enjoy their residential experience.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

The school was asked to review the security of the sanctions book. All sanctions are now recorded in a bound and numbered book. This is tamper-proof which ensures that records are kept secure. The school was asked to ensure that routine checks and servicing are completed on all fire detection equipment. Arrangements are in place for routine checks to be undertaken and on all fire equipment and for this to be serviced in line with agreed schedules. These arrangements help to keep young people safe from risk of fire.

The school has been proactive in ensuring that the residential accommodation is in a good state of structural and decorative repair and that the toilet and shower facilities are of a good standard. An extensive renovation and refurbishment programme has been undertaken. The roof has undergone total renovation and internal damage caused by the ingress of water has been repaired. The male shower facilities have been completely refurbished. The female boarders now share the Annexe (residential provision) and enjoy a higher standard of accommodation. This action ensures that the young people live in accommodation that is a good quality and is consistent with their needs.

The school was asked to address the shortfall in the head of care's professional qualifications. The head of care has achieved a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 4 in leadership and management.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

There is a strong emphasis within the school and the residential provision on the encouragement and promotion of a healthy lifestyle. The school offers flexi-boarding and consequently the primary responsibility for the young people's health remains with their parents and carers. However, the boarders' ongoing health or medical needs are identified and promoted. The details of these form a part of the young people's placement plans and are regularly reviewed. Arrangements are made for young people to access to a range of specialised services provided by the school, which include speech therapy and support with mental health issues. The level of support is good and is favourably commented on by the majority of stakeholders. One stakeholder specifically commented on the school being able to 'meet the mental health needs of the pupils.' Boarders express their satisfaction with how they are cared for if they are unwell.

The robust systems for the administration and storage of medication in the residential facility safeguard the young people. Care staff receive training on the administration of medicines. There is a sound assessment process for young people who want to keep and administer their own medicines. All of the staff within the residential facility and a number within the school have completed some level of first aid training and this arrangement ensures that the young people have access to a qualified first aider at all times. Pupils are encouraged to take 'Omega 3' capsules. These are provided by the school and given out on a daily basis. The young people's physical well-being is catered for. The boarders are encouraged to participate in a range of physical activities and can have supervised access to well-equipped multi-gym located in the Annexe.

The catering provision is an outstanding aspect of the school that clearly demonstrates the school's commitment to the promotion of healthy eating. The young people and staff are provided with healthy nutritious food that meets their dietary needs. The young people understand the importance of eating vegetables and fruit. Staff, young people, parents and carers have the opportunity to have a school allotment to grow their own vegetables and soft fruits. This helps the young people to understand how food is produced as well as providing a range of healthy vegetables that are shared between home and the school. Fresh eggs are provided by chickens from the school's small farm.

Menus are well planned in consultation with the young people and offer a good variety. A vegetarian and a salad alternative is always available. Medical and cultural diets are catered for. The children are encouraged to try different foods. However, staff are very sensitive to the

needs of young people with autistic spectrum disorders who have particular issues about their food. These are accommodated, not challenged or become a subject for change. This reduces the stress and anxiety that mealtimes can present for these pupils.

Meals are taken in three dining rooms located in the main building. Two small dining rooms provide comfortable spaces for those pupils who find socialising difficult and choose to eat away from the general melee of the larger dining room. This provides the opportunity for these pupils to observe and become familiar with the school's routine and once settled into this choose whether to move to another dining area. All of the young people and staff come together for breakfast and lunch. Staff make considerable effort to ensure these mealtimes are social and orderly occasions for those young people who elect to eat in the main dining room.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

Excellent practices and procedures have been established by the school that safeguard the young people, promote their welfare and ensure that they live in a safe, secure and caring environment.

The care workers follow practices that demonstrate a high respect for the young people's privacy. The young people confirm that they have no issues or concerns regarding their privacy. They advise that staff always knock on bedroom doors and wait for their response before entering and, that supervision at bath and shower time is not intrusive. The bathroom and showers areas on the ground floor in the Annexe have been upgraded to provide a improved and good level of privacy.

The young people have access to a payphone to make calls to parents, carers, families and friends. Its location provides a reasonable level of privacy. The school has a practical and realistic approach to the young people's ownership of mobile phones. Clear guidance on their use has been drawn up in consultation and with agreement of young people and parents and staff. The guidance fully addresses the impact that the misuse of mobiles, by the making of inappropriate audio and video recordings, has on a individuals privacy. Pupils are able to retrieve emails from parents and carers on computers based in the school and in the computer room in the Annexe. These arrangements ensure that pupils are able to maintain contact with their parents and carers and contact external agencies without having to seek permission from staff. There is a private, comfortable room available for use when the pupils have any visitors.

Written information on the young people is kept confidential and secure and electronic records are password protected.

The school has formal complaint procedure and young people to use to raise issues or concerns with the school. However, there is an expectation, borne out in practice, that issues are dealt with informally. All of the young people are aware of the formal process but express their confidence in being able to take any concerns directly to members of staff and/or raise them during circle time and other community meetings. The young people advise that they are always listened and that 'staff do as much as they can to sort issues out'. None of the young people or parents /carers have found it necessary to make a formal complaint.

The school has robust procedures in place that ensure the young people's welfare is promoted and that they are protected from abuse. The school ensures that all of its staff have the

knowledge, understanding and skills required to respond to child protection concerns. Regular training is provided to the whole staff team on child protection and safeguarding awareness. The training addresses the specific issues of working with young people with autistic spectrum disorders. Staff are fully aware of the procedures that are in place and demonstrate a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in responding to an allegation or suspicion of abuse. The response to any child protection concern is led by one of the school's two designated people. The designated people have completed appropriate training for this role. The local safeguarding board confirms that there have been no recent safeguarding issues at the school.

The young people are protected from bullying. The school has a zero tolerance to bullying and takes positive steps to ensure that there is an immediate, effective and consistent response to any incidents that occur. The young people confirm that there are very low levels of bullying within the school and the Annexe and that staff act immediately and effectively to any information that bullying might be taking place. The school has raised the young people awareness of cyber bullying. Young people are encouraged to share with staff any inappropriate, offensive or threatening material received via the intranet. This can be done anonymously. This arrangement demonstrates the school's understanding and awareness that some of the young people may feel anxious or embarrassed about sharing this type of information.

Young people leaving the premises or the supervision of staff without permission is not an issue in the school or the Annexe. However, staff are aware of the dangers associated with this behaviour and the vulnerability of the young people and are familiar of the procedures that they would need to follow.

The school provides residential services and provision for young people with autistic spectrum disorders and related social and behavioural difficulties. The effective management of their behaviour is an outstanding feature of the school. The young people can display a range of difficult, and anti-social behaviour. Staff are trained and develop the skills and knowledge that help them to understand, manage and respond to the young people's behaviour. The school's management of behaviour is focused on recognising and rewarding appropriate behaviour. The provision on individual behavioural risk assessments and positive handling plans ensure that there is a consistent approach to the management of the young people's behaviour.

All of the young people are aware of the standard of behaviour that is expected from them. The young people are given the opportunity, and are encouraged, to reflect on their behaviour and to consider the impact that it has on others. Young people who make progress receive public praise and recognition. This positive reinforcement helps them to understand what behaviour is acceptable and appropriate. Staff and young people provide good role models and are actively involved in supporting those young people who are experiencing difficulty in managing their behaviour.

The young people can display aggressive behaviour. Staff are provided with regular training on the use of positive handling techniques, including the use of de-escalation and distraction techniques and the use of restraint. The school has recently changed its positive handling programme. The decision to stay with the new programme has been the subject of discussion and agreement with the young people. Staff make effective use of the de-escalation techniques taught as part of the programme and there has been significant reduction in the use of physical restraint.

Measures of control within the Annexe include the imposition of approved sanctions and the use of physical restraint. All of the young people are aware of the standard of behaviour that is expected from them and think that the rules are fair. One young person advised that the 'rules are designed to keep us or our property safe.' The behaviour of the young people living in the Annexe is effectively managed and there is very limited use of sanctions and no use of restraint during the residential periods.

All sanctions and significant incidents, including the use physical restraint, are routinely recorded and monitored.

The school takes positive steps to keep the young people, staff and visitors safe from fire and other hazards. Established systems are in place for the regular checking and servicing of fire safety and detection equipment. The recently upgraded extended alarm system in the Annexe includes sounders with integral flashing lights, which provides an additional level of safety for young people with hearing difficulties. A fire risk assessment is in place and has been reviewed. The school takes steps to give staff the skills and knowledge to help protect the young people from harm. One member of the care staff has completed training to act as a fire marshal and all care staff have completed training in fire awareness. One of the care staff is trained to undertake portable appliance testing on electrical equipment. The member of staff has completed the annual check throughout the whole school and is available to complete additional checks as and when required. This arrangement reduces the risks posed by boarders bringing in unchecked electrical equipment into the residential facility.

There are fully established systems for completing a full range of risk assessments that include premises and activities taking place on and off-site. This helps to ensure the safety of the young people. The majority of stakeholders make positive comments on the steps taken by the school to keep children safe. Security measures within the school are good and contribute to the protection of the young people, and provide a safe and secure environment.

The school is proactive in ensuring that the pupils and staff are safe from other types of hazards. No significant unnecessary health and safety hazards were identified during the tour of the premises or grounds. The school has recently won a further recognition for its excellence in compliance with health and safety matters.

The school has staff recruitment and vetting procedures. These are robust, thorough, consistent and meet the requirements on the national minimum standards. Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks are in place for staff, governors and adults living on site who are not working in the school. CRB checks are updated every three years. The identity of all visitors are checked. These arrangements help to safeguard the children and prevent them from being exposed to potential abusers.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

The residential contribution to education is very well established. There are close links between care and education teams, which help ensure a consistency and continuity of care and management of behaviour. Routine handovers ensure that both teams are kept fully informed on day-to-day matters and of any significant events affecting the young people. Care staff ensure that the children regularly attend and arrive punctually at the school. Care staff assist

young people with homework and projects. The young people have access to the intranet in the Annexe enabling them complete research to help with their school work.

During the period that the residential facility was closed the care staff spent some of their time assisting in the classrooms. The care staff advise that this gave them a unique opportunity to see how the young people managed in class to get know the next cohort of young people moving into residence. The care staff are actively involved in extra-curricular activities and provide practical support and supervision on school trips and with the young people's independence programmes. Care staff contribute to and attend the annual review of a pupil's statement of special educational needs.

The young people receive outstanding individual support when they need it. Individualised support is identified through the pupil's individual education plan and/or through their placement plan. The school arranges for the young people to have access to a number of specialist services if needed. These include access to an education psychologist, speech therapist and the Connexions service. Young people with mental health problems have access to two community psychiatric nurses. They provide services within the school and undertaken outreach work with the young people and their families. Referrals to these services can be requested by parents, staff and the young people. A recently implemented multi-professional mapping tool that provides an excellent overview of the involvement of each of the services. This information is can be accessed by all staff and is made available to parents.

Each of the young people is allocated a key worker whose responsibilities include implementing, monitoring and reviewing their key children's care and placement plans, liaising with external agencies and keeping in contact with parents. All of the young people identify at least one adult in the school who they feel confident about seeking advice from. Young people are fully supported in making and sustaining significant life changing decision. One of the young people commented that the 'staff have made a real difference in my life and helped me with my problems.'

The educational psychologist and the community psychiatric nurses also fulfil the role of an independent person for the young people. This arrangement increases the availability of adults who young people can approach. Young people do not have to directly involve the school, which ensures an additional level of independence, security and confidentiality.

A number of the stakeholders comment on the personal support that they receive from the school. A parents' and carers' group has been established to provide support network for them. The group have access to school resources and are invited to some inset training.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

The young people are consulted about the day-to-day running of the school, and key decisions that affect their daily life and future; their views are fully integrated into the care practices. Staff demonstrate that they place a great value on the views and opinions of the pupils. There are a number of established forums, which the children can use, to raise issues and to express their views and opinions. For example, circle time is an integral and important daily feature of the school. It provides a daily opportunity for pupils to receive information about events and visitors to the school. This is an important matter for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders who find changes in routine difficult manage. Circle time provides a safe nurturing environment

in which consultation can take place and where pupils are encouraged to express their views, opinions, thoughts and feelings on a wide range of issues. Staff manage circle time with a great deal of sensitivity and do not follow a set agenda.

The regular evening residential meetings provide a further opportunity for the boarders to reflect on their day and to discuss the evening arrangements. Young people routinely contribute and participate in their statutory reviews. There is ample evidence that the children are listened to and that they are able to exert influence and bring about changes.

It is an established part of practice within the Annexe for each of the boarders to have a placement and care plan. These are in the process of being prepared following the reopening of the residential provision. The format used is accessible and clearly sets out how the school will care for each pupil in accordance with his or her assessed needs. Information for the placement plans is initially sought during the pre-admission process and then routinely reviewed.

The placement plans reflect the individual needs identified within the pupil's statement of special educational needs. The boarder's care plan sets out how their current and future needs will be met. The care plan is drawn up in consultation with the pupils by their key worker. Individual and group targets are identified and worked on for a term. The care plans are monitored and reviewed by the pupil's key worker. Care staff prepare regular reports and contribute to their key pupil's annual reviews.

All admissions to the school are thoroughly and sensitively planned and the young people, parents and carers are fully involved with the process. Prospective boarders have the opportunity to have a taster day in the Annexe. This enables the young people to become familiar with the way that the residential provision operates and to have an experience of what is like in residence. This is helpful and supportive for those young people who do not like changes to routines and/or have not experienced being away from home.

The leaving process is sensitively planned. The number of days that a young person is in residence is gradually reduced, allowing both the young people, parents and carers time to adjust to the idea of their child living back at home full-time. The young people enjoy a celebratory meal with the care staff at the end of their placement.

The care staff are fully aware of the importance of the young being able to maintain contact with their families and carers. The school offers a flexi-boarding arrangement. Consequently the vast majority of the young people only stay a couple of nights at the school and are at home for the rest of the week. The young people have access to the Annexe's payphone and may use their mobiles to call home when they are in residence. Each of the pupils has an individual email account which they can use to send and receive electronic messages. These arrangements ensure that pupils are able to contact members of their family/carers without having to first seek permission from a member of staff. The large majority of stakeholders comment positively on the regular contact that they have from the school via phone calls and the use of the home /school diary.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Woodeaton Manor School comprises a large 225 year old manor house and a number of associated outbuildings and cottages. It is located within its own grounds on the edge of the village of Woodeaton. The buildings are listed and located within a conservation area.

The residential accommodation is provided in a former stable block called the Annexe. Two recently refurbished cottages are used to provide a residential facility to support the school's independence programmes.

The premises provide sufficient space and facilities to meet the needs of its pupils. Part of the manor building is allocated to a small team of local authority workers, but this does not impede on the day-to-day running of the school.

The Annexe has recently been the attention of a major repair and refurbishment programme. The roof has been completely renovated to prevent it from leaking and damage caused by previous ingress of water has been repaired. The school has taken this opportunity to review and rationalise its residential provision. This includes providing residential accommodation for female boarders in the Annexe. This arrangement ensures that all boarders enjoy the same standard of accommodation. Boarders comment positively on the new boarding arrangements and on being able to socialise more freely with each other.

The accommodation is over two floors and provides a good range of communal areas. These are well resourced and provide good spaces for recreational activities and the opportunity to just 'chill out'. The two sitting rooms have a small food preparation area, which the young people can use to make snacks and drinks. Sleeping accommodation is on the first floor and is provided in spacious double bedrooms. Young people are free to personalise bed spaces if they wish. The first floor accommodation is reserved for the exclusive use of the boarders.

As part of the refurbishment programme all of the accommodation has been redecorated to a high standard and all the floors have been re-carpeted or recovered. Furniture throughout the residential provision is domestic in style. Some items are damaged, shoddy and show signs of wear and tear.

The school has sufficient numbers of baths, showers and toilets for the number of the boarders and staff in residence. The young people are able to carry out their personal care in privacy and dignity. Female and male boarders' toilets and showering facilities are separate. The male showering and toilet facilities have been refurbished and provide a good level of privacy. There is an ongoing programme to improve and update the facilities for the females.

The young people have been kept fully informed about the refurbishment programme and have been consulted on colour schemes, floor coverings and on the shower and toilet facilities. The young people are pleased with the new accommodation and commented about the 'rooms being nice, warm, dry and not draughty' and on the 'better use of space.'

## **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

Information on the school's ethos, purpose, values, organisation and what it sets out to do for the young is detailed in a number of documents that are provided to parents, carers and significant others. One of these provides a useful explanation of the terminology used in the school. The school has a website that provides additional information. The young people's

handbook provides a range of information about the school and the Annexe. This is produced in a colourful and accessible format. Collectively the information provided enables the young people, parents and carers to determine the range of services the school provides and understand how it operates.

The school is organised and managed in a manner that delivers and maintains an outstanding standard of care. The head of care and the care team are experienced and qualified. During the period that the Annexe has been closed, staff have gained additional experiences and undertaken training that enhanced their practice and work with young people and ensures that their safety and welfare is promoted.

Care staff undertake a range of training that provides them with the skills and knowledge to provide a consistent high standard of residential care and meet the individual needs of the young people. The shortfall in the number of staff having successfully completed National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 in caring for children and young people has been fully addressed. The head of care has achieved a NVQ level 4 in leadership and management.

There are sufficient numbers of staff to meet the needs of the young people and to support them in their activities. The provision of female accommodation in the Annexe has rationalised the deployment of the staff. The care team consists of four staff who are all on duty in the residential provision during the periods that the young people are in residence. The young people are cared for by a mixed gender team who have a range of professional and life experiences. The care staff provide the young people with good role models. Staffing levels allow individual and group needs to be accommodated. All of the care staff sleep in every night. The staffing arrangements provide a level of consistency, continuity and predictability that is essential for a number of the boarders staying overnight at the school.

Staff supervision is an established and integrated part of staff development. However, this arrangement was suspended during the time that the Annexe was closed. The school has taken positive steps to ensure that the care staff's professional development has been maintained and supported. Care staff have accessed additional training. They have taken on new additional responsibilities that have an impact on the welfare and safety of the young people.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. There is ample evidence that the school is fully committed to promoting equality and diversity in practice. Equality and diversity underpins the ethos and values of the school. All of the children are valued as individuals and all are given the same opportunities. All of the young people are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to have an influence on the way that the school is run. No young person is assumed to be unable to communicate their views. The young people are made aware of different cultures and beliefs and participate in different festivals and celebrations. The school makes sure that the young people's specific needs are met through appropriate assessments. The care teams have a good balance of gender and age, which reinforces positive role models for young people.

The school has developed effective quality assurance and monitoring programmes. Information gathered from these exercises is used to improve facilities and practice within the school. There are established systems in place for the headteacher to monitor key records for trends and patterns. Members of the governing body routinely conduct unannounced visits to the school. Each visit

includes checks on key records and on the premises. The visiting governor routinely meet with staff and the children. Reports are made following each visit.

## **What must be done to secure future improvement?**

### **Statutory requirements**

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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### **Recommendations**

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that all furniture is in a good state of repair. (in breach of national minimum standard 24)