

Vale of Evesham School

Half Termly Monitoring Report by the Independent Care Standards Visitor (Standard 20)

1. Times & Date of Visit: Tuesday, 17th March 2020, 7.20 – 11.30 am

- 1.1. The visit was unannounced. The Head of Care was not in school as he continues to be on sick leave. His Deputy is acting as the Interim Lead and was on duty and available on my arrival. The Head arrived shortly afterwards and welcomed me and provided me with a brief update prior to her attending a morning long Trust meeting.
- 1.2. In light of the current pandemic I proposed a different structure than usual to my visit in order to keep pupils, staff and myself safe and not put undue pressure on the school. Apart from the virus the school was also dealing with chicken pox in the EY's department as well as having ringworm and shingles in the school.
- 1.3. The Interim Lead and I agreed that I would work out of a downstairs office, visit the provision to observe breakfast but not sit as usual at a table with pupils and staff and inspect the accommodation, the facilities and the recording and reporting with the Interim Lead when the pupils had transitioned into school. Significant time was also spent talking through and examining the planning and development work which has taken place, that which is currently being undertaken and that which is planned to be achieved by the end of this term and the end of the school year. Telephone contact was made with the Link Governor following my visit.
- 1.4. The following records were scrutinised:
 - Behaviour Record;
 - Physical Intervention Record;
 - Bullying Record;
 - Complaints;
 - Consequences Log.
- 1.5. The following paperwork was given particular scrutiny:
 - Appraisal documentation;
 - The updated Residential Action Plan November 2019-August 2020;
 - The Practice Development Plan which supplements the Residential Action Plan and is being overseen by the Care Improvement Partner (CIP);
 - The Bedroom Allocation Risk Assessments;
 - The Fire Drill Record, Residential Provision 2019-20;
 - The Fire Risk Assessment Report under the regulatory reform (Fire Safety Order 2005) carried out 14th November 2019.

1.6. Accommodation was made available to me had it been necessary or appropriate to see a pupil or a member of staff in private.

2. Behaviour Records

2.1. Since my visit last term on the 4th February there have been twenty-four incidents in the Care setting involving six pupils, two of whom were girls. Two pupils (LB a boy and NP a girl) each accounted for six of the incidents. The incidents involving the male pupils consisted of damage to property, disruptive behaviour and swearing at peers and members of staff. Those of the female pupil consisted of biting and injuring herself, swearing at peers, damage to property and persistent disruptive behaviour.

3. Physical Intervention Record

3.1. No interventions have taken place in the Care setting since my last visit on the 4th February 2020.

4. Bullying Record

4.1. No incidents of bullying have been recorded since my last visit on the 4th February 2020.

5. Complaints

5.1. No complaints relating to the residential provision have been lodged since my last visit.

6. Consequences Log

6.1. The Care Team have reviewed, in line with one of the recommendations made in the last Standard 20 report, the continuing use of the log. They have concluded that the log duplicates other existing recording processes which are in place and are therefore ceasing its use.

7. Compliments Log

7.1. The Interim Lead has reviewed the use of this log. It was in use at one time but has not been more recently. The school has decided to create a new procedure to replace the old one in collecting and logging the feedback from families, visitors and others.

8. Staffing

8.1. Currently the Head is acting as DSL with two Deputies. The Interim Lead is not part of the Safeguarding Team but has good access to the Head and in January this year completed her safeguarding training. She is clear and confident as are her team around how to identify and report safeguarding concerns.

8.2. Since the start of the academic year three new members of the Care Team have been appointed and inducted. One has very significant experience in other care

settings. One longstanding, very committed member of staff is leaving at the end of term in order to work elsewhere. The school is in the process of appointing a replacement. I had hoped to meet with one of the new members of the team to seek their views about their induction, training and support and their current level of confidence in carrying out their role. Unfortunately this did not prove possible but will be factored into my next visit.

- 8.3. All Care staff have had training from the nurse in the administration of medication. The school had planned for staff to also have Fire training in late March but the closure of the school because of the virus has postponed that to a later date. Staff supervisions are up to date.
- 8.4. A Governors' sub-committee to oversee and support the residential facility has been formed and has met on two occasions. The minutes from the meetings was made available to me. The composition of the sub-committee consists of the Link Governor and two other governors one of whom is a parent of a child in the school. Two governors who have been recently appointed to the Board have knowledge and experience of safeguarding. The Link Governor is continuing to make unannounced visits to the residential provision and focussing on one or more aspects and subsequently reporting back to the Head and the Interim Lead.
- 8.5. The Interim Lead is working extremely hard and very effectively in leading the team and robustly reviewing, with the support of the Head, all the policies and procedures and the quality of effectiveness of the Care. She, the Head and others have created clear, detailed, logical plans to review and strengthen the provision which encompass and goes beyond the recommendations made in the recent inspection report. This progress was verified in the telephone conversation which took place with the Link Governor following my visit and from my examination of the documentation detailed in paragraph 1.5 of this report. The Practice Development Plan provides a valuable addition to the current coordinated approach to improving the quality and effectiveness of the provision.
- 8.6. The Interim Lead is creating a checking file, so she has a clear procedure for monitoring and reviewing all of the functional aspects of the provision.
- 8.7. The staffing level at the time of my visit was good. Seven staff were on duty and they supported appropriately the pupils at breakfast. Good practice was observed in supporting those pupils who needed additional support to achieve greater independence. An example of this was a pupil with learning difficulties who was supported in spreading butter on his toast and slicing it into two. The member of staff engaged the pupil in the activity, helped him to direct his gaze and initially assisted him by hand on hand support.
- 8.8. The staff were well deployed across the units and the Interim Lead supported them and monitored their work which ensured the safety and wellbeing of the pupils.

9. Children and Young People

- 9.1. One of the male pupils has been transferred, through a planned move, to 52-week provision to meet his current and emerging needs.

- 9.2. At breakfast the majority of pupils exhibited good levels of confidence and independence in choosing the content of their breakfast, helping themselves and others and in clearing up at the end of the meal. Behaviour in the dining room was very good and the atmosphere was calm and homely.
- 9.3. Pupils in Cotswold had dressed up and disguised themselves as a “Welcome to Cotswold” photo display entitled “Can you guess who we are?”
- 9.4. Very good discrete bedroom accommodation has been created for one of the older girls who has complex needs. It ensures her safety and that of others and appropriately addresses her need for privacy and dignity.
- 9.5. Pupils were welcoming and chatty and interacted positively with members of the Care staff.

10. Accommodation

- 10.1. The Care facilities have been much improved as a result of reorganising and enhancing each of the units and physically improving aspects of provision including the medical room. Carpets and windows have been replaced, windowsills painted, bathrooms upgraded including fitting safety mirrors, curtains repaired, all of which has resulted in a much brighter, much enhanced, lighter and more ordered environment. Further work is planned and in process to re-carpet other areas and paint stair rails and tidy up the adjoining roof areas where items have been “posted” through the windows.
- 10.2. The Care office which is downstairs in the main part of the school has also been de-cluttered and there are plans which are in hand to recreate an office upstairs within the residential facility.
- 10.3. The Residential Maintenance Log was scrutinised. The physical checking at the start of each week of the residential provision by the Head, the Interim Lead and the Site Manager is securely in place and the updated Action Plan attests to the identified work having been completed.
- 10.4. A planned unannounced fire drill took place at 6pm on the evening prior to my visit. All boarders and staff were evacuated within three minutes of the alarms sounding. No pupils were distressed, they were calm during the evacuation and settled quickly when they were back in the provision. There was one learning point which has been actioned and resolved. The fire door keypad in Cotswold did not automatically release the door on the alarm sounding. It was reported as soon as possible to the Site Manager who carried out a second drill with no pupils present to check that the door release and keypads were in working order which they were.
- 10.5. A Fire Risk Assessment by PR Associates carried out on the 14th November 2019 concluded that “taking into account the fire prevention measures observed at the time of the inspection that the hazard from fire (likelihood of fire) at these premises is medium”, that is “normal fire hazards for this type of occupancy with

fire hazards generally subject to appropriate controls other than minor shortcomings”.

10.6. Bedroom Allocation Risk Assessments are in place and were scrutinised. They are clear and comprehensive.

11. Recommendations

11.1. All of the recommendations made in my last report have been addressed.

11.2. As a result of this visit, the school needs to consider the following:

- Restructuring the staffing structure in the residential provision. The Interim Lead is working very hard and effectively and is being well supported by the Head and the Link Governor, but she needs an interim deputy to act as Interim Senior Team Leader if the ambitious plans which are in place are to be achieved at the appropriate standard and in a timely manner. It is currently not reasonable to expect her to continue working as she is without an adjustment in the structure to support her and her life/work balance. I discussed this with her and she is confident that there is a member of the team who could fulfil this role on an interim basis. I would suggest if this restructuring is possible it should be an interim arrangement for one year to Easter 2021 on order to ensure operational and strategic continuity given the continuing absence of the Head of Care.
- The Interim Lead, to ensure all the previous Standard 20 recommendations have been met, had prepared a comprehensive response sheet. It is a good example of her attention to detail and her determination to strengthen and develop the provision. The form has a section at the bottom for the Head’s comments. This needs to be signed off and dated.
- The headings on the Behaviour printout refer to “Persistent resistance” and “Persistent disruption”. The school may wish to consider the terms “Ongoing resistance” and “Serious disruption” as alternatives as ‘persistent’ could be seen as obstinate behaviour requiring intervention.
- There remains some objects on the roof which have been “posted” by pupils which need removing.
- The Checking File which the Interim Lead is collating has the potential to be a very effective monitoring tool, but thought will need to be given as to how and when monitoring of practice and spot and random checks will be undertaken and recorded. If an Interim Senior Team Leader (ISTL) post is created this could be undertaken by that member of the team and the Interim Lead could maintain regular oversight.
- Following the visits of the Link Governor, her reports are shared with the Head and the Interim Lead. The reports should also be forwarded to the members of the Residential sub-committee for them to discuss at their next meeting prior to the papers going to the Board.

- I gather the school shut at the end of the school day on Thursday 19th March due to the virus and the resultant staffing issues. It shut, I understand, on the basis the decision would be reviewed the following Monday. However, reopening was subsequently seen as not workable so the school will now reopen sometime after the Easter break dependent on the government's advice at that time. The Interim Lead is working for the remainder of this term and then needs to take a clear Easter break to rest, keep safe and hopefully be fit and well to undertake her role once the school is open and functioning again.

11.3. The context for the recommendations is that the school, to my mind, has made significant progress since December. While there is still much to be done the school displays clear direction and determination to achieve its planned aims.

David M Braybrook MA, FRSA
Consultant in SEND work 0-25 years
Independent Care Standards Visitor
25th March 2020