

Vale of Evesham School

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

1. **Times & Date of Visit: Wednesday, 16th September 2020, 2.00-7.00 pm**
 - 1.1. The visit was unannounced. The previous visit was a virtual “visit” on the 10th July. Contact was made with the school in early September to ascertain, given the continuance of the pandemic, as to whether the school wished the visit in this half term to be an actual announced visit, an announced “virtual” visit or unannounced. The school opted to make it an unannounced one subject to being held under review in case the COVID-19 situation and the requirements altered.
 - 1.2. I was able on this visit to meet and talk with the Head, the Acting Head of Care, the Acting Deputy Head of Care, individual members of the Care Team and school based TAs who are supporting pupils and activities in the late afternoon/early evening. The Head of Care remains on sick leave. I also met and talked with one of the two Link Residential Governors and the Executive Head Teacher of the new MAT which is to formally assume responsibility for the provision from November when the re-brokered arrangements have been completed. The latter meeting was particularly helpful as prior to this I only had email contact with the previous Executive Head Teacher following the Ofsted inspection in the latter part of last year.
 - 1.3. The visit provided me with ample opportunity to observe a range of Care practices, meet and talk with individual pupils in the provision and at teatime in the hall and join in some games and activities with them including go-karting! I also had the opportunity to visit the residential accommodation prior to the arrival of the pupils and become aware of the recent improvements as well as the planned developments which are in progress.
 - 1.4. A room was made available to me had it been necessary or appropriate to see a child or a member of staff in private.
 - 1.5. The school had on my arrival all the necessary COVID secure arrangements in place. Face coverings for adults were in place in and around the school when the staff were outside their bubbles.
2. **Safeguarding**
 - 2.1. The recently appointed DSL and Pastoral Care member of staff is in post.
 - 2.2. As the residential provision was not functioning from the 25th March to the end of the Summer Term no safeguarding concerns were logged. The residential staff maintained good, regular contact with families and pupils during this time and provided support and sought assurance that CYP were safe and their needs were being met.

- 2.3. As the residential pupils were phased into the provision at the start of this term and had only returned in the week prior to my visit no safeguarding concerns in the residential had arisen.
- 2.4. Ensuring effective, responsive safeguarding procedures are in place has been, and remains a key priority. In talking with the Head I asked her what of all the changes she has made in the school since her arrival in January had had the most impact, safeguarding was top of the list.
- 2.5. Part of the staff training at the start of term focussed on safeguarding and the role and responsibilities of staff.

3. Complaints

- 3.1. No complaints have been made since my last virtual “visit” on the 10th July.

4. Behaviour Management Record

- 4.1. No incidents have occurred in the residential setting since the return of the pupils into the provision in early September.

5. Physical Management Record

- 5.1. As with the behaviour record, no physical interventions have occurred since the return of the pupils into the residential provision.

6. Bullying

- 6.1. No incidents of bullying in the residential provision have occurred since the residential pupils returned to the provision this term.

7. Compliments

- 7.1. The school has created a “Comments Book” in order to collate the email and letter/card feedback from families as well as professionals and visitors.

8. Staffing

- 8.1. Apart from the phasing in of the residential pupils back into the provision, the number of resident CYP has been limited this term to a maximum of 10. One of the units, Dilwyn, is not functional due to issues with the roof in that part of the building. The remedial work is in hand, having been delayed by the pandemic and is planned to take place in the October half term. As a consequence the provision is, in the short term, housed in two units and meals are taken in the school hall. At the time of my visit seven CYP were boarding in the provision.
- 8.2. During the temporary closure of the residential provision, the residential staff became part of the day provision and were working with their education and therapy colleagues in supporting CYP in the adjusted routines necessary as a consequence of the pandemic. This joint working proved valuable not only in delivering the adjusted curriculum but also in creating a whole school approach and integrating more closely the work of the residential provision into the total

provision. Residential staff were very positive about their experience of working more closely with colleagues in education and health. The arrangement also provided time for the Acting Head and Acting Deputy Head of Care to focus on reviewing operational aspects of the provision, reviewing the reporting and recording processes and the work needed to upgrade aspects of the accommodation.

- 8.3. The Acting Head of Care has been very well supported and supervised by the Head and latterly by the new Executive Head Teacher. Further valuable support in strengthening and developing the provision has also been provided by the Care Improvement Partner (CIP), the school's SIP and the active involvement of the two Link Residential Governors through the creation of the Residential Sub-Committee which reports regularly to the Governing Body. The CIP visited at the start of the term and apart from providing supervision for the Acting Head of Care also scrutinised the school's recent NMS audit.
- 8.4. In order to understand the extent and impact of the significant changes and developments that have taken place over the last eight months, I asked the Head and the Acting Head of Care a series of questions around the change agenda, priorities, outcomes, impact and future strategic intentions. They are both very clear as to what has been achieved, what are current priorities and what they wish to achieve across the current academic year. Their focus is on what will further strengthen a whole school approach in which the residential provision will be a key component.
- 8.5. Upskilling of the Care Team is well in hand with members of the team currently working to attain Levels 3, 4 and 5. In addition to the Safeguarding training that took place at the start of term, training in First Aid, administration of medication and Fire Marshall training has also taken place.
- 8.6. The medication record book in Cotswold was scrutinised and signed. It met requirements. The School Nurse works solely in the school setting but the Acting Head of Care can seek medical advice around, for example, drugs but cannot involve the School Nurse in the work of the residential provision. Following discussions with the Acting Head of Care I suggested she made contact with the Head of St John's School for the Deaf which she, a Link Governor and the Head visited together earlier in the calendar year, in order to seek permission to speak to their school nurse who works across the whole school and leads on aspects of pupil wellbeing, mental health and healthy living. I understand the Head of St John's invited the school to contact them again if they could be of help.
- 8.7. The current staffing level was good for the seven pupils currently in residence. The staff were effectively deployed and the number of staff and their deployment ensured the safety and wellbeing of pupils. The school has advertised for an additional care officer and an additional care assistant. If following interviews these appointments are made the staffing level in the residential setting will be very good.
- 8.8. A new, exciting initiative is in place of involving the TAs in school spending time, on a rota basis, in the residential provision to understand the work and role of the provision and support some of the on and off-site activities. Apart from the

value of this for the pupils, it also contributes to the school's work and declared intention to creating a whole school approach.

- 8.9. The Head and the Acting Head of Care audited the residential special schools national minimum standards in July this year. There is a high level of compliance. However, there are four standards that are currently ragged as requiring further attention and these are being actively addressed.

9. Children and Young People

- 9.1. The pupils appeared to be very happy to be back at school and have settled quickly and easily into the Care setting. They were enjoying each other's company and interacted well with each other and with staff. They were chatty, cooperative and well-behaved. Some off-site activities, such as swimming, have been curtailed due to the pandemic. Walks and physical activities on-site have temporarily replaced them. The Forest School off-site activities are able to continue and they were going there the day after my visit. Pupils chatted, chilled, played board games, drew and one boy practiced playing his guitar in his bedroom before and after tea.
- 9.2. Tea, which consisted of hot soup and a choice of sandwiches and fruit, was eaten in the hall and the Pupil Forum was held there at the end of the meal. The pupils expressed a range of views in the Forum as to the activities that they would like to be considered; soft play, bikes, water play, rock climbing and Netflix evenings. They were also confident and forthcoming with their thoughts as to the next stage of improving bedrooms but were also very appreciative of the significant improvements to their bedrooms which had taken place in the summer holidays. After tea, as the weather was good, some pupils made use of the go-karts and others played football. A male TA who was on his first evening in the residential setting joined in enthusiastically with the football. Talking to him afterwards he appreciated the opportunity to find out more about the residential provision and to work with and support pupils in the more informal setting out of the classroom.
- 9.3. One of the Link Residential Governors was present in school in the early evening which gave me the opportunity to meet and talk with her. The conversation confirmed the very beneficial changes and developments that have taken place since January and she spoke enthusiastically about the planned current and future developments.

10. Accommodation

- 10.1. Considerable and extensive work has taken place over the period of closure of the provision and the summer holidays to improve and upgrade the quality of the provision especially in relation to the bedroom accommodation.
- 10.2. A planned walk for pupils and staff through of the fire evacuation procedure took place at 4pm in the first week. It worked well and there were no issues. As all of the residential staff are trained as Fire Marshalls there is no need for notices to be displayed as to who the Marshalls are.

11. Recommendations

11.1. There are two recommendations arising from this visit. The first is to make contact with St John's School for the Deaf to seek some actual or virtual contact time with their school nurse in order to gain a clearer operational understanding of how to develop further the current provision. The second is to ensure, now that the provision is operational again, that all of the records, files and paperwork is maintained at the required level and to ensure that the four minimum standards requiring attention are addressed in a timely manner to ensure full compliance.

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29th September 2020