



AUTISM ACCREDITATION PEER REVIEW

SERVICE REVIEWED: Oliver House School

DATES OF REVIEW: 11-12 July 2017

REVIEW TEAM MEMBERS: Clive Osborne (Team Co-ordinator), Robert Knox (Team Member)

OVERVIEW OF PROVISION

Oliver House School is an independent specialist day school registered for up to 40 boys and girls, aged 6 to 19, with severe autistic spectrum conditions and associated complex learning needs, challenging behaviour and associated anxiety. All 35 pupils on roll have a diagnosis of autism and at least one co-morbid condition.

The school provides individual and group teaching areas, a dining room, gymnasium, food technology suite, sensory rooms, a spa and two outdoor areas. The environment is uniformly low-arousal and frequently adapted to meet the needs of individual students, for example in individual learning spaces.

All practices at Oliver House School are autism specific and research-based. Person-centred approaches, a strong aspect of Oliver House's ethos, are embedded in the school day. Autism-specific practices include the Alert programme, SCERTS, Intensive Interaction, ABA, TEACCH and PECS.

A key element of the provision is the 1:1 teaching provided in individual learning spaces which are highly personalised in order to maximise each student's access to the curriculum.

Members of the multi-disciplinary team – Behaviour Analyst, Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists and a CAMHS Nurse, are all enabled to contribute to each young person's individual provision.

The school's aim is: "To bring about the best in every young person to enable them to achieve positive experiences and progress according to their own individual abilities". The intention is to work on maximizing a young person's strengths, abilities and ambitions while pursuing success in accredited qualifications and developing personal independence in order to prepare them for life after school.

Oliver House School was rated Outstanding by Ofsted in September 2016.

The school also has four associated children's homes, offering 52-week residential care. However these are not registered with Autism Accreditation and were not addressed during this review.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

Observations

The review team observed a total of 15 lessons and other sessions, which occupied around eight hours. These included lessons for groups and individuals (including a remarkable Virtual Reality session), lunch, therapeutic sessions and off-site visits. Observation scores break down as Majority Met, 5 per cent; Fully Met, 95 per cent.

The review team were struck by the consistently high achievements in all the sessions observed, from lessons to activities outside the school. Because of the high proportion of elements found to have been Fully Met, the team were particularly rigorous in moderating each other's scores in order to produce the final figures.

Interviews and Discussions

Individuals/roles interviewed include:

- Head teacher
- Deputy Head of Education
- Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme Co-ordinator
- Transitions Co-ordinator
- Operations Director
- In addition to formal interviews, informal conversations were held with teachers and teaching assistants in the course of observations
- Occupational Therapist
- Speech and Language Therapist
- Behaviour Analyst
- Three parents, interviewed face-to-face
- Students

Documentation

The documents seen include

- Individual student documents, including one-page pupil profile; pen portrait of progress summary sheet; pre-transition personal development support plan; SCERTS assessments, targets (for each phase and for individuals) and WOW Moment records; curriculum provision map; sensory one-page profile and sensory diet; learning pathway development; communication support plan; sensory equipment guidelines; health action plan; risk assessments
- OT: provision planning and reports
- SaLT: individual assessments and reports
- Positive Behaviour Support: individual assessments, support plans and data
- Policies: SCERTS; transition; sensory
- Lesson plans, weekly plans and long-term planning
- ASDAN Transition Challenge Portfolio
- Examples of staff training, such as communication ethos, mental health awareness, healthy eating and personalised training (for staff about an individual)
- Social Stories examples and training resource, Comic Strips resources
- ALERT emotional regulation programme working document
- Evidence of school-parent collaboration
- Oliver House prospectus and mission statement
- Oliver House OFSTED report 2016

KEY FINDINGS

As a result of this process, the following actions were identified for the service to work on:

| Actions for development | Reasoning |
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| <p><i>Standard C18: ...staff are aware of how to recognise and support other conditions that research shows can frequently co-exist with autism</i></p> <p>Oliver House School intends to further its support for young people by ensuring staff have a deeper knowledge and understanding of the co-morbid conditions presented alongside autism.</p> | <p>The school is developing the way it approaches conditions which present alongside ASD and combine to create a unique profile of need for each individual. It already encourages staff working with young people with co-morbid conditions to, for example, attend assessments and therapy sessions, and staff can undertake training on conditions such as Learning Disabilities, ADHD, Tourette's, Pica and anxiety. More recent sessions covered epilepsy and foetal alcohol syndrome in order to further support individual students. Plans are in place to extend autism training to allow staff to work at Level 3, which has links to an accredited research project. The next phase should be to measure and evaluate the effect of co-morbidities and the associated required medication. This will allow the school produce a detailed overview of the impact on the individual of the conditions and the medication, which it can then use to develop personalised provision to minimise their effect. The school would also benefit from ensuring that staff have the opportunity to reflect on and evaluate the effectiveness of their training.</p> |
| <p><i>Standard E9: ...each autistic student supported in developing problem-solving skills and coping strategies relevant to independent functioning outside or after school</i></p> <p>The school intends to focus further on supporting students to develop specific skills that will be required once they leave Oliver House.</p> | <p>Provision in Phase 4 is designed to support students preparing for life after Oliver House School, either in work or in continuing education. An integral part of has been the successful development of opportunities, embedded in the curriculum through programmes such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, to extend individual students' scope for problem-solving and self-sufficiency. Another programme that is paying dividends in the Asdan Transition Challenge, which is fully adaptable to meet the needs of individuals. Now the school intends to focus on skills to bridge the gap between life in school and life after it. This should involve defining and delivering a personalised and portable package of skills which will support students in their next stage of life. The school also acknowledges the benefits that will accrue from ensuring that training and practice in this area consistently complement each other.</p> |

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| <p><i>Standard P25: ...evaluate the effectiveness of support and curriculum activities in enabling each autistic student to understand choices related to maintaining their physical health and well-being</i></p> <p>The school is planning to further develop its work in developing systems to maintain the health and well-being of young people.</p> | <p>The wide range of needs of the young people at Oliver House School, and the school's determination to deliver fully personalised provision, mean that the issue of health and well-being is complex. Senior leaders regularly review systems and policies concerning the promotion of health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Staff have received training in, for example, healthy eating; each student has an extremely detailed health action plan; and programmes such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme provide a range of options for an active and healthy lifestyle.</p> <p>The school has committed to the Food For Life award, supporting increasingly healthy options in the canteen, and staff and young people are developing resources at New House Farm to support extra food production there.</p> <p>The school will benefit from the further, sustainable, development of these and similar projects, following the established precedent of working in collaboration with staff and young people.</p> |
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The following areas were also identified as examples of what the service does well.

| Specific areas of strength | Reasoning |
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| <p><i>Standard C3: ...manage, organise and resource the specialist provision that enables autistic students to achieve identified benefits and outcomes</i></p> <p>The school is supported by a high level of resourcing which allows it to make fully personalised provision for each young person, enabling them to go on to high achievements.</p> | <p>Oliver House School enjoys universally high levels of resourcing, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • highly personalised provision, producing excellent benefits and outcomes • high levels of staffing (some students routinely have at least 2:1 support) • good investment in training and CPD • curriculum resources (including funds for extra-mural activities) • the physical environment. <p>The high level of personalisation is evident throughout the curriculum and the school day.</p> <p>The SLT is working on streamlining the individual curriculum of all students into a single document incorporating planning, teaching and learning, assessment and accredited courses. This is to be delivered in September 2017.</p> <p>At the heart of this curriculum map is a SCERTS-based assessment regime focusing on social communication, sensory issues and emotional regulation. This starts with a detailed assessment before a student joins the roll, in which particular attention is paid to causes of anxiety and co-morbid conditions. From there the curriculum is</p> |

designed to incorporate functional skills and, as appropriate life skills, vocational skills and option subjects, based on students' strengths and needs, and to which they can contribute. The assessment is also the basis for individual care and therapy programmes.

In addition to the high staffing, there is regular and relevant training (*see Area of Potential Strength Standard C19*). In observations it was clear that the training is effective, with staff following protocols in individual plans calmly and flexibly.

A key outcome of the initial assessments is that a student's physical environment meets their particular needs. Many found previous placements unsettling and were unable to engage. At Oliver House students have individual teaching rooms, designed around their needs. The personalisation extends to the furniture, levels of visual stimulation and the décor.

The school recognises that its willingness to meet these individual needs make a positive impression on students as they settle in.

The SLT is aware of a potential criticism: that the individual rooms might imply a degree of social and educational isolation. However, this essential aspect of the provision allows all students, despite their complex needs, to feel regulated, safe and secure and ready to learn. Every young person's programme includes joint sessions outside the room (including trips to local shops and the adjoining country park).

Personalised curriculums are designed to interest or inspire young people. Students are encouraged to follow their interests and, in some cases, have opportunities to initiate ideas, such as a virtual reality project currently being followed by one student, for which significant resources are available.

All Phase 4 students have communication and social interaction elements of the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme in their curriculum. During the review team's visit a group of students and staff were on an expedition which involved a night's camping.

Students always have the option to go to the "engine room" sensory space.

The building is regularly redesigned to create new rooms and different spaces to accommodate the needs of specific students.

The environment is consistently clean and tidy, and any damage is repaired quickly, which again fosters a positive attitude in the young people.

Good quality visual support resources were observed in routine use across the school.

Standard C19: ...Staff reflect on how they are supporting each autistic student, learn effectively from their experience and refresh their knowledge base

The staff's deep and broad understanding of autism, underpinned by timely and relevant training, allows them to develop valuable positive relationships with the young people in their care, in many cases overcoming the challenges of particularly complex needs.

A huge strength of the school is the excellent rapport and communication between staff and young people.

For example, a session in a commercial gym would have appeared to an outsider as a group of friends working out together rather than a formal teaching/learning activity. Staff later explained that such relationships build a foundation of highly personalised support to young people over time. In another session the staff member acknowledged that the student was leading work on a project designed to create virtual reality images of a local college in order to help students planning to move there on leaving Oliver House.

Such rapport would not be possible without all staff having a sound and detailed understanding of autism, and working in a consistent way. This approach allows delivery of differentiated lessons and other sessions, tailored for the individual student.

That understanding of autism is underpinned by a comprehensive training programme (mainly in-house, although some is delivered by the Priory Group Autism Lead) and the school's commitment to CPD. New appointees complete an online training course for autism before a seven-day induction period that includes first aid, safeguarding, physical handling, communication and autism. All are expected to pass the autism section and to progress to higher-level autism-specific training.

Whole-school training to develop understanding and skill sets is usually driven by needs of pupils. Recent sessions covered epilepsy and foetal alcohol syndrome.

Weekly twilight sessions are used to focus on specific pupils' needs and on key skills.

This training allows staff to deliver effectively autism-specific tools such as the Alert programme, SCERTS, Intensive Interaction, ABA, TEACCH, and PECS, to ensure knowledge and practice are up to date and challenge stereotypes and myths about autism.

The specialist staff model good practice, supported by the volunteer role of Communication Champions from the staff team. Sensory Champions are about to be appointed.

Standard C23: ...staff actively work in partnership with other professionals, who

There are high staffing levels with a robust collaborative culture, and a strong emphasis on a multi-disciplinary ethos and teamwork. This is reflected in close

support each autistic student, to deliver a consistent and unified approach

Collaboration between teaching staff and other professionals is embedded in the school's provision, and clearly has a beneficial impact on young people in every Phase.

relationships between teachers and TAs, the school and parents, and most impressively between staff and young people.

Student profiling and planning is led by the Behaviour Analyst, the Occupational Therapist and the Speech and Language specialists. Comprehensive assessments are made by the team of all new pupils, resulting in detailed profiles of each pupil. Highly personalised plans, starting with transition, are implemented and regularly reviewed, with input from all those who work with the individual. These include guidance for staff on communication strategies.

Professional recommendations inform planned and targeted intervention and enable staff to draw on the full range of resources available. The plans include techniques from Intensive Interaction (which is embedded in school practice) and SCERTS. For example, Music for Movement sessions, designed by the SaLT and OT, are delivered by education staff.

The Behaviour Analyst uses data from a range of sources from both school and residential provision to identify progress, and regularly joins the therapeutic team to re-assess programmes.

The therapeutic team model skills and collaborate with education staff. In a 1:1 OT session, when the student refused to engage, teaching assistants successfully applied his individual de-escalation strategies: the planned activity was abandoned and the student was supported to join in another, where he felt more comfortable.

The collaborative approach was observed in many sessions. The review team noted in particular the levels of collaboration and comfortable mutual support in a group literacy lesson led by a TA while the teacher and other TAs joined the students in completing the task.

There was also collaboration on several levels when two groups from different Phases went to the garden of one of the residential homes. The school gardener led a planting activity, supported by the teacher, and the students in succeeding in the task. The head of the residential home greeted the group, provided drinks and biscuits and joined them for a refreshment break. This session also gave young people from different Phases opportunities to interact with each other.

PROGRESS MADE TOWARDS PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

| Recommendation | Action taken to recommendation |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><u>Specialist Standard 4:</u> <i>Teaching/Learning - Methods</i></p> <p><u>Specialist Standard 9: Well-Being</u> <i>Promoting Independence</i></p> <p>"In keeping with Oliver House School's IDR area for development related to Phase 4 young people, the review team consider an area for development to be the provision of challenging curriculum content matched to the ability of individuals with consideration of paired and/or small group sessions to provide cooperative learning."</p> | <p>The review team found that typically students will have individual teaching in the morning, covering English/maths and personalised curriculum content, and a group-based physical activity/personal topic work in the afternoon.</p> <p>The curriculum is fine-tuned and personalised to give students optimum access to teaching and learning.</p> <p>This approach means that young people with a range of ability and challenges other than autism, such as high levels of anxiety, are able to make sound academic progress.</p> <p>Some students can now achieve good passes in GCSE subjects such as English, maths, science, history and geography, while others gain certificates in a range of leisure-based subjects. Staff also use a wide range of visits and trips to enhance learning, including activities related to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.</p> <p>All pupil curriculums have SCERTS embedded, which underpins their development of self-regulation strategies, and supports social interaction.</p> |

FEEDBACK FROM AUTISTIC PEOPLE

Review team members spoke informally to a number of students during the visit.

One student discussed his previous high levels of need including anxiety and explained that specialist support at the school, including sessions at an outside gym, had increased his self-confidence and his ability to plan for life after Oliver House. He also praised the relationship staff have with students: "Staff treat students with respect".

Another student clearly enjoyed the opportunity to speak with the review team. The conversation consisted of light-hearted comments and constructive criticism about the school's catering. Staff later explained that this student formerly had issues concerning food which meant that until recently he would not have been able to discuss such matters readily with a stranger such as the review team member.

FEEDBACK FROM FAMILIES

| | Envelopes Sent | 35 | | | | |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|--------|----------------|
| | Envelopes Returned | 12 | | | | |
| Statement | | Response | | | | |
| | | Unscored | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| | I am able to contact the school about my child on a regular basis | | | | 1 | 11 |
| | I am given information about my child's/family member's progress on a regular basis | | | | 1 | 11 |
| | The school listens to my views about my child and their education and takes them into account | | | | 1 | 11 |
| | I am aware of how to raise concerns about any aspect of my child's/family member's education and am confident that they will be considered and addressed | | | | 2 | 10 |
| | The school has a good understanding of my child/family member and works well to meet their needs | | | | 1 | 11 |
| | The school respects the complexities of caring for a family member on the autistic spectrum | | | | 1 | 11 |
| | The school provides opportunities for me to find out more about autism and my child's/family member's specific needs | | | 1 | 3 | 8 |
| | The school has had a positive impact on my family member's life and learning | | | | 1 | 11 |
| | Total Replies | | | 1 | 11 | 84 |
| | Percentages | | | 1.04% | 11.46% | 87.50% |

The school sent out 35 questionnaires, of which 12 were returned. Of these, nine contained extra comments. Many of these included praise for Oliver House School's knowledge and understanding of ASD

Comments also included:

- Since my son started Oliver house school, his behaviour and emotional state has been quite settled down. Oliver House School understand very well about ASD. My son and my family are really happy and proud of the school.
- I can't praise Oliver House enough. My son was an extremely anxious individual with very complex needs, including aggression, before he started Oliver House. In the years he has been there he has grown mentally and academically into a wonderful adult. If I could keep him at Oliver House for the rest of his life I truly would.
- Our son...has developed lots of new skills, and surprises us all the time now by doing new things. This year he will be going on his first ever residential, something we never imagined would be possible.
- Our son settled into school exceptionally well, we believe this was a result of the staff's experience, they "understood" him really quickly and as a result of this and the continued expert support he receives he is finally thriving. We feel our son is in a place where he is cared about and a place he can achieve his fullest potential. We are so grateful to Oliver House for supporting us and our son.
- I can contact the school daily if required. The school listens to my views about our child and everything is acted upon accordingly. Doesn't. The school provides outstanding opportunities, teaching and support.
- Oliver house has given our son the setting to be himself he has been excluded from two mainstream and two "special" schools. Oliver House is everything he needs – people who understand autism and anxiety. A quiet setting with high staffing ratio. Off-site/outdoor activities with a purpose – not token gesture
- Since attending Oliver house (two years now) he has found his true ability he has gone from being taught in isolation from other students with 2:1 support to being settled in a class with three other boys, having 1:1 support when in school and 2:1 when off-site. For our son and our family this is really immense and more than we ever dreamed of two years ago after everyone just giving up on him.
- Oliver House has been good communication with us (as a family). We are always comfortable to talk about any concerns about our son. School creates tailor made schedule for my son and he is able to access his own classroom, which massively helps his complex needs. Everybody is very supportive.

One response was "disagree" but the person completing the form did not use the comments panel to say any more.

One response was all "strongly disagree" but the comment panel contained only extremely positive remarks, so those responses were instead added to the "strongly agree" column.

The review team interviewed three parents face to face.

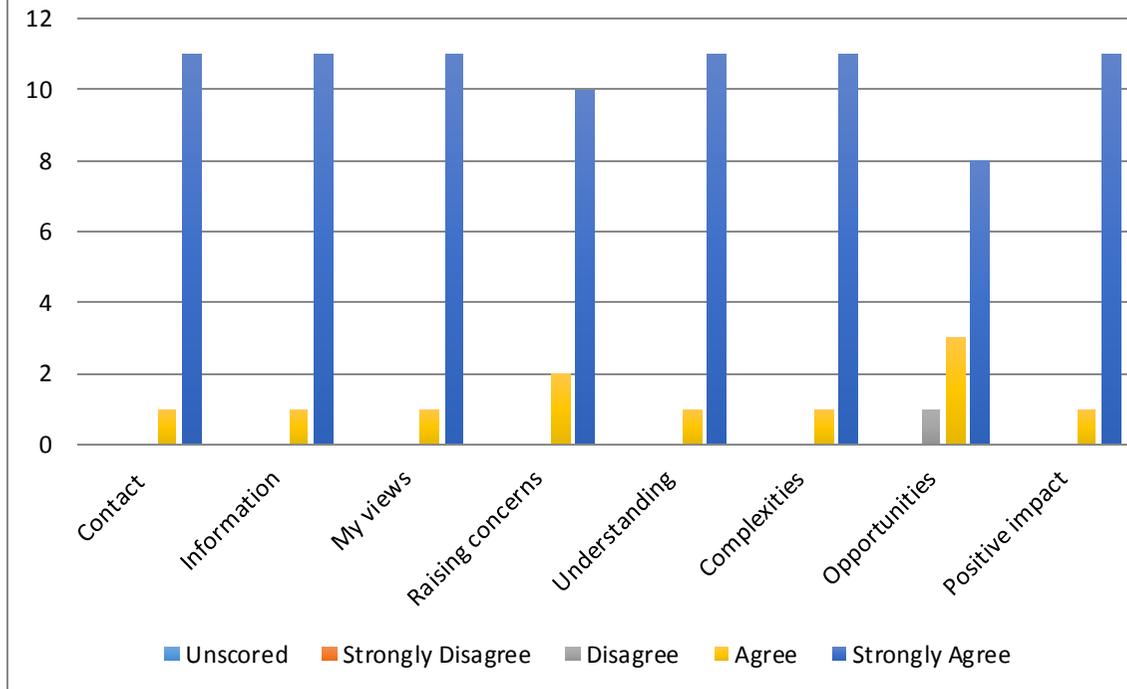
A common theme was that their child had struggled in either special or mainstream schools, but at Oliver House School had made extremely good progress, particularly in socialisation.

All praised the high levels of personalisation in the provision for their child, and the commitment of the management and staff to ensuring the best outcomes for their child.

One parent said: "This is the first time I have felt an integral part of his team, sharing information and strategies. Here I feel I'm on equal footing. After all I know him better than anybody." Another emphasised the importance of the school's willingness to offer support which eases the pressure of having a child with autism and additional complex needs.

All praised the staff for being "well trained, capable and patient".

Oliver House Family Questionnaires



FEEDBACK FROM OTHER PROFESSIONALS

Oliver House School was rated outstanding after an OFSTED inspection in September 2016. The report noted the high degree staff understanding of each pupil; the high quality of teaching & learning and communication skills; and strong links with families.

OBSERVATION SCORES

| Topic | Not met | Partially Met | Majority Met | Fully Met |
|-------------------------------------|---------|---------------|--------------|-----------|
| Differences in social communication | | | 1 | 14 |
| Self-reliance and problem solving | | | 2 | 13 |
| Sensory experiences | | | | 15 |
| Emotional well-being | | | | 15 |
| TOTAL | | | 3 | 57 |
| PERCENTAGE | | | 5.0% | 95% |

Examples of standards Fully Met include:

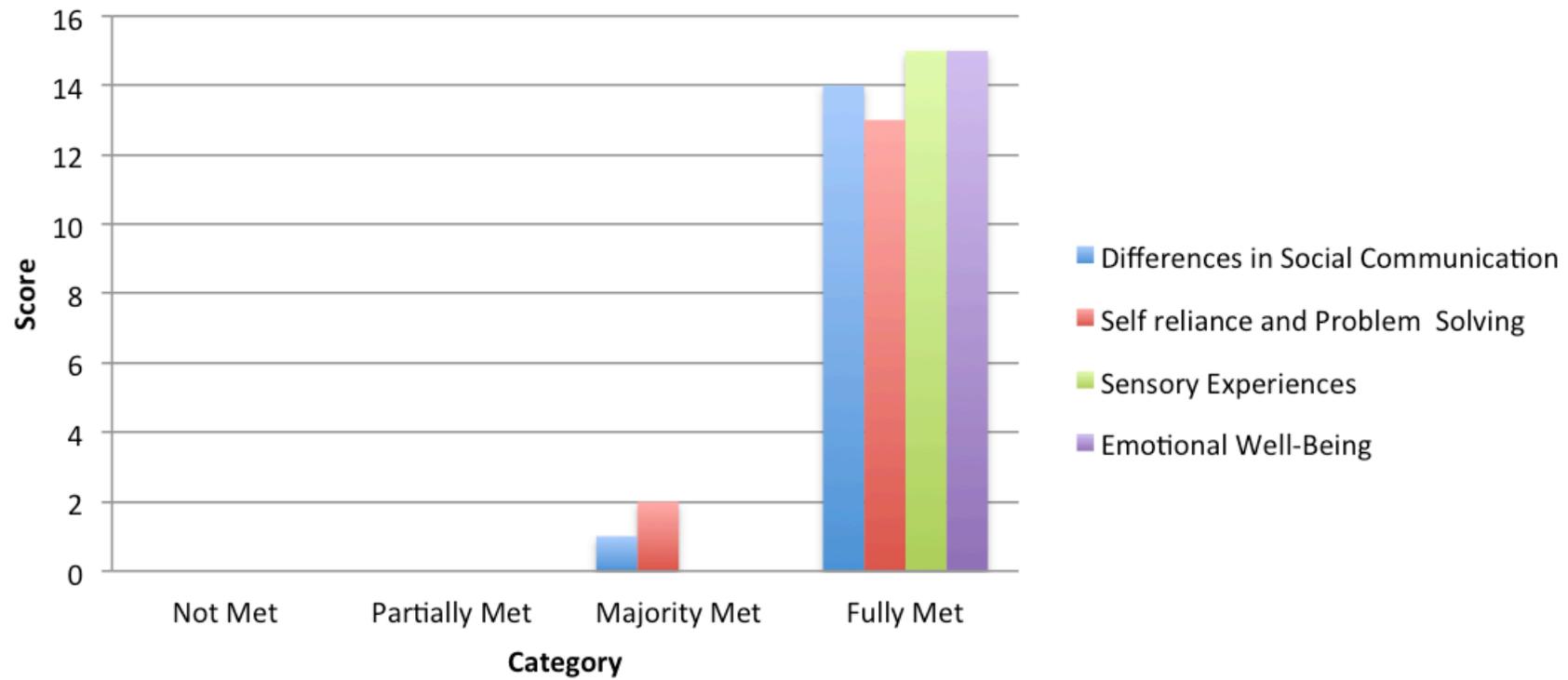
- Excellent eye contact, lots of smiling, good use of praise
- A pupil who was disengaged was given time to 'grow' into the task
- TAs without a student joined in the session and completed task alongside students
- Student took the lead developing his work during the session
- Staff enthusiasm is high – no sign of frustration or impatience
- Mature wordplay: "Can you spell Isosceles?" "I-S-O-sellies" (The student went on the spell the word correctly)
- The session had a feeling of a group of adults enjoying themselves
- Appropriate visual support at a point of potential anxiety

Examples of standards Majority Met include:

- Pupils were had limited scope to answer questions – they could have done more in the group
- Staff missed an opportunity to introduce a review team member to a pupil who appeared anxious about having a new face in the room
- There were missed opportunities to support a pupil to complete a task which, staff acknowledged, he frequently finds challenging

No standards were judged to have been Not Met or Partially Met.

Oliver House School observations



FINDINGS FROM OBSERVATIONS

| Theme | Comments |
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| <p>Differences in social communication</p> | <p>The school provides a Total Communication environment to meet the wide range of communication needs among students, ranging from the non-verbal to the fully articulate.</p> <p>The school employs two SaLT specialists who work three days between them. They assess all students and produce profiles with clear programmes designed to ensure optimum communication for each young person. Individual programmes incorporate aspects of techniques of, for example, TEACCH, PECS and Social Stories. Several students and staff were observed to be using PECS books effectively.</p> <p>SCERTS is at the centre of the curriculum. All students have specific targets, which are reviewed regularly, and are supported by staff to achieve them.</p> <p>Visual resources are used well. Each of the student rooms has a visual timetable, and the review team observed many instances of their use being integral to a session. Excellent use was made of other visual resources throughout sessions.</p> <p>Visual information in the dining room provides clear directions for students, including a sequence showing the process of being served, and another showing how to clear up at the end of a meal.</p> <p>Staff are skilled in applying Intensive Interaction. The review team observed incidental use of Intensive Interaction skills in a number of sessions.</p> <p>The review team observed one particular pupil who has made dramatic progress, from hiding in a tent under blankets and being unable to communicate with any adults, to interacting in a learning environment and to going to public places such as the beach.</p> <p>Training is an important part of ensuring the effectiveness of communication – please see our extended comments on this under <i>Area of Potential Strength Standard C19</i>)</p> <p>Although pupils have their own teaching rooms, individual programmes include chances to socialise, and all young people have daily opportunities to go out of the school.</p> <p>A recent innovation is the creation of Communication Champions within the staff team who monitor, promote and further reinforce good practice.</p> <p>The Communication Team are continuously looking to improve provision. In September, Lego therapy will be introduced with one group of students.</p> |
| <p>Self-reliance and problem solving</p> | <p>The school aims to “achieve positive experiences and progress” for each of its young people. One challenge in this is the wide range of complex needs – some extremely challenging – that Oliver House School students have.</p> <p>The staff universally demonstrate a deep and broad knowledge and understanding of autism and the co-</p> |

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| | <p>morbid conditions they work with. One example of this was observed when a student was not engaging with the main part of a session: staff smoothly changed to another activity which still met the guidelines of his individual sensory profile.</p> <p>In lessons, the review team very often found students understanding and happily engaged in the task. In particular cases such as senior students visiting a public gym, they were confident and able to organise the activity themselves. One student explained this regular session had helped develop his self-confidence in many other areas. He added that the relationships built with staff in the session also helped him develop others elsewhere which was strong enough to support him when potential problems arose.</p> <p>A common format in teaching and learning sessions is for teachers to demonstrate an activity then hand over: "See if you can do it". As learning progresses open questions continue: "all here are the compasses what do you do next?" In the latter example, when the circle was malformed, the student was asked what had gone wrong.</p> <p>The review team observed several instances where an integral part of a session was allowing students to decide how they would complete the task. And at lunchtime for example, students are able to choose whether to eat in the canteen, in their individual learning space or in a communal area.</p> <p>For pupils with greater communication challenge binary choices were routinely offered, for example a bottle of orange juice or blackcurrant, or two coloured items for a PE exercise.</p> <p>The review team observed that support for students was generally highly personalised. For example, staff might stand away altogether from an activity while others would offer close support, such as helping a student to close a bag where necessary.</p> <p>Other students were supported with the daily structure by competent use of now/next, for example: "Five minutes till we finished, then toilet".</p> <p>On a very few occasions the review team felt more time could have been given for a student to process a request.</p> |
| Sensory experiences | <p>The whole school environment is low-arousal and meets individuals' sensory needs.</p> <p>Lessons are delivered in individual or small-group rooms, and a range of other spaces, including multi-sensory rooms, are available.</p> <p>The OT conducts a comprehensive sensory assessment of all new students in at least two environments (usually home and school) to develop as rich an individual sensory picture as possible.</p> <p>Assessment results are used to ensure that the room allocated to a student matches their sensory needs. In one case a student who is particularly sensitive to sudden unexpected noise, such as coughing, has a sound system in his room – the music covers noises which could make him anxious.</p> |

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| | <p>The school will amend the environment to meet an individual's sensory needs. During the review one student became unsettled because the walls in his room were over-decorated, and staff helped him take down stimulating material.</p> <p>The OT contributes to and assists the implementation of a transition plan with strong sensory elements for students joining the school which initially includes significant 1:1 input from the OT. As students settle in, the OT input reduces, allowing other staff to implement sensory diets and circuits.</p> <p>All students have a sensory profile that includes a sensory diet, often based on the ALERT programme. Young people are encouraged to contribute to their sensory diets and some have regular sessions of sensory circuits.</p> <p>Plans are in place to develop diets to be used at home.</p> <p>The OT also contributes to the curriculum. The review team observed a Moving to Music session conducted in subdued lighting and therapeutically designed to encourage specific movements such as clapping.</p> <p>A good example of the school's sensory awareness is the low-arousal dining room, which has neutral decor and furniture. There is no noise from the kitchen because meals are prepared and plated before students arrive at lunchtime (meals are ordered at the beginning of the day). Young people who might find the dining room too stimulating are able to eat back in their individual room or common areas.</p> <p>Sensory support observed around the school include a weighted blanket, ear defenders and the ability to remove shoes and socks. Staff routinely keep their voices pitched low.</p> <p>While training in sensory issues is provided, the OT feels that modelling of sensory circuits and diet is more effective.</p> <p>To further promote the importance of sensory interventions the school plans to appoint Sensory Champions from among the staff team to mirror the existing Communication Champions.</p> |
| Emotional well-being | <p>Many young people come to Oliver House School after previous placements have broken down. The individual care and attention given to newcomers is recognised as a vital first plank in what becomes an effective support structure which underpins the development of strong working relationships and the achievement of previously apparently unattainable goals.</p> <p>The obvious outcome of this is the happiness of pupils observed throughout the review visit. Staff at all levels understand the importance of a holistic approach which takes in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The physical environment <p>The building is designed to a low-arousal, and is kept clean and tidy, with any damage quickly made good.</p> <p>Individual working spaces are frequently adapted – often with input from the young person – in order to</p> |

accommodate students' needs.

- The emotional environment

Several factors contribute to securing a calm and supportive atmosphere in which productive teaching and learning take place – for the first time, in the case of some students.

The high standards of physical accommodation encourage a positive approach from the young people, while the obvious efforts of staff to cater for individual needs further fosters good relationships.

High staff levels ensure adequate support (sometimes 2:1) and spare capacity is available so that more challenging episodes can be fully covered, maximising the safety and security felt by students. In one observed incident a student lay on the floor in a communal area under his weighted blanket. Staff quietly ensured his safety and comfort using low-arousal strategies until he felt able to leave the room in an orderly way.

Good visual support underpins communication which minimizes anxiety.

Personalised support programmes and effectively differentiated teaching and learning also contribute to the sense of well-being enjoyed by pupils whose conditions include high levels of OCD and anxiety as well as autism.

In-depth knowledge and understanding of autism throughout the staff team contributes to the security of young people – for example staff were observed rapidly amending a planned session with which a student was refusing to engage, and substituting a different activity. The alternative activity still met the objectives outlined in his individual sensory profile.

On another occasion, after a challenging incident, two staff members collaborated smoothly in order to support the student to have a shower and prepare for his afternoon activity.

The contribution of diet to a healthy lifestyle is recognised: students have detailed health action plans, staff have received training in healthy eating and programmes such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme provide a range of options for a healthy and active lifestyle.

CONCLUSION

Oliver House School applies extremely high and standards for the staff and students, and these are reflected in outcomes for its young people which parents, and Ofsted, regard as remarkable.

A high level of personalisation, including strategies such as individual teaching rooms and strong relationships between students and staff (who are well-trained, understanding and committed) allow the school to achieve its aim of bringing out the best in everyone. This is underpinned by levels of resourcing which allow in practice extraordinary levels of individualised provision – which in turn produces consistently good results for young people at the school, some of whom have extremely challenging conditions alongside their autism.