

Wells Park School

Inspection report for residential special school

Unique reference number	SC018021
Inspection date	14 March 2008
Inspector	Joe Staines
Type of Inspection	Key

Address	Wells Park School Lambourne Road CHIGWELL Essex IG7 6NN
Telephone number	0208 502 6442
Email	davidwood@wellspark.freemove.co.uk
Registered person	Essex Learning Services
Head of care	David Wood
Head / Principal	David Wood
Date of last inspection	23 January 2007

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Cripins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

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

Wells Park School caters predominantly for children who present emotional and behavioural difficulties. It has residential facilities which offer weekly boarding with all children currently returning home at weekends. Children come from all areas within Essex and the school may take some children from London Boroughs. The school operates a 24 hour behaviour management policy which is based on consistent positive reinforcement procedures and this is the basis on which all teaching and social aspects of the school's curriculum take place. Incorporated within this is a key-worker system. The school caters for 40 children within the five to 11 age range and thus takes children to the end of year 6. In exceptional circumstances year 7 children may be accommodated. Wells Park is organised into two discreet but integrated areas - education and care. The responsibility for management of education on a 24 hour day to day basis is delegated to the Head of Education. The responsibility for care is delegated on the same basis to the Head of Care. These two officers, together with the director, form the senior management team which reports directly to the governors. The residential school is organised into four house areas, managed in pairs by two care officers and a senior child care officer under the direction of the Head of Care. Children are placed amongst the most appropriate peer group residentially according to their social and emotional needs. Each pupil, on admission, is allocated a key-worker who has general responsibility for the care of that child and works closely with the class teacher in the management of each pupil.

Summary

This key inspection covered all of the key National Minimum Standards. The overall judgement was that Wells Park School produces outstanding outcomes for children. All outcomes areas were judged as outstanding, with the exception of staying safe, which was judged as good. The factors leading to the outstanding judgements include the detailed ways in which the school obtains information about the needs of children, and responds to needs with professional, well thought out plans. Children placed at the school have histories of emotional and behavioural difficulties, as well as communication and attachment problems. However, the school enables children to contribute positively and develop associated resilience and personal development. The management of the school is consistent and focussed on achieving the best possible outcomes for children. Children benefit from structured, yet homely and nurturing environment, and are supported by staff who have good knowledge of the tasks required of them. Good results are achieved in relation to reducing the levels of challenging behaviour and facilitating reintegration into mainstream schools. Children are able to enjoy varied and stimulating activities, linked in to educational aspirations and the promotion of self-esteem.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, it was recommended that the school should consider how the format of information provided for children can be developed to promote the children's understanding of the content. This has been fully addressed and a range of information is provided in ways suited to the needs of children placed at the school. Recommendations were also made in relation to notification procedures, the audit trail of recording physical interventions, and

recruitment checks on new employees. All of the recommended actions have been undertaken and none of the recommendations are repeated in this report.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children receive outstanding health care and live in a healthy environment that is adapted to the needs of children living at the school. Children's health needs are thoroughly assessed and identified at an early stage. Before a place is offered the school completes a thorough assessment. Detailed information is sought at the pre-admission home visit, including medication taken, immunisations, allergies and family history. Consent forms are also filled in at the home visit. Once a child starts at the school, an excellent health plan is completed for each child detailing how his or her specific and general health issues are to be addressed. Particular health needs which may impact on future outcomes for the child are identified at the earliest opportunity and staff, in partnership with parents, actively seek out the services needed to address these, for example, the school arranges for children to access specialist hospital services, such as Great Ormond Street, and occupational therapist assessments that identify any specialist equipment required are obtained and responded to. The school has a good record of involving parents and other professionals in multi-disciplinary meetings. Children's health needs are promptly identified and their needs are very effectively met. Staff who administer medication are trained in the process. The school operates an effective medication policy including procedure and practice guidance which specifically addresses the use of non-prescribed medication. Children's welfare is promoted by extremely clear, well maintained and comprehensive records of all medical interventions and medication administered. All care staff and some education staff receive first aid training on either a one day or three day course. Children are cared for by staff with good qualifications and experience. The school employs a sports worker with specific responsibility for promoting good health and works together with coaches from the Schools Sports Partnership Programme to promote children's good health. Children's health needs are extremely well promoted through a whole school health policy which covers emotional health and well-being, healthy eating, physical activity and personal, social and emotional education, ensuring the welfare of children is exceptionally well safeguarded.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's privacy is promoted through the implementation of a confidentiality policy by staff at the school. Staff members knock and wait for responses before entering private spaces. Personal information is stored securely under lock and key. Children are able to utilise a variety of areas suitable for private meetings with parents and others. Staff are sensitive to personal problems that may cause embarrassment to boarders and deal with sensitive matters in as unobtrusive a way as possible. Children are provided with clear guidance about what to do if they feel unhappy. As part of the pre-admission process a home visit is made with the aid of a slide show including information about how to complain. Symbols are displayed at several prominent points within the school about how to express being unhappy. An independent advocate visits the school regularly and can help children with any complaints if needed. Staff receive training as part of their induction on communication and the importance of listening to children. Children are protected from abuse by robust staff vetting procedures, including all relevant checks with statutory agencies. However, the school's recruitment records are not fully compliant with the National Minimum Standards, potentially reducing the robustness of

the procedure. Further safety measures to protect children include a clear and detailed child protection policy and staff training that emphasises the importance of the subject to all who attend. All care staff receive a three-part induction programme on child protection, including guidance on responding to concerns or allegations of abuse and whistle-blowing. The school benefits from the director's prior experience as a membership of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and they have undertaken extensive training in child protection matters. The school has a detailed policy on countering bullying, which includes clear guidance on the steps to take when bullying is recognised and strategies for working with children who bully or are bullied. Staff deal immediately with any unacceptable behaviour on a one-to-one basis with the child involved. Children and parents do not identify bullying as being a problem at the school. Children who are absent without consent are protected by the school's approach to the subject. Clear guidance is available on the steps to take in the event of a child being missing. Pre-completed forms are kept in respect of each child, recording significant information. An example of good practice is the commendation given by local police officers about the way the school responded to a recent case of children being absent without authority. Children who attend Wells Park School have all been assessed as having special educational needs due to emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school has a clear policy for managing behaviour, using a token system and consistent positive reinforcement. Parents and children both report considerable improvement in the ability of the children to manage their behaviour in a more positive way since joining the school. Reduced levels of the need for restraint and significantly improved attendance figures serve to further evidence the dramatic improvements made by children who board at the school. Children are generally protected by the records kept in relation to restraint, but the lack of recorded children's views reduces the quality of these records. Children are protected from the risk of fire and other hazards by a combination of comprehensive risk assessments and regular testing and maintenance of safety equipment, including fire safety alarm systems and related equipment.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The residential contribution to education is highly regarded by the school and children receive outstanding levels of support from care staff who are skilled in providing individual support based on the specific needs of the child concerned. Attendance registers show that most boarders have improved attendance levels and educational attainment is comparatively higher than similar settings for primary school age children with emotional and social difficulties. Children enjoy reading and this is encouraged by the availability of a wide range of reading material, which children value and appreciate. Parents feel consistently positive about the educational progress of their children whilst attending Wells Park School. Children benefit from the consistent, structured routine and input from staff that have an understanding of the needs of children placed at the school. Children are actively encouraged by staff to take part in a wide range of leisure activities both inside the school and in the community. The school is particularly good at identifying activities that link in to the therapeutic needs of children and encourage and support children to take part in activities that promote self esteem and a sense of achievement, whether this be a learning related computer game or an activity involving building something or working with peers. Staff share their own interests and enthusiasms with children and young people and encourage them to try out new activities and interests. Activities are often linked to educational aspirations and reading is particularly promoted. Children and young people's own individual interests are also actively encouraged and supported. Children clearly enjoy these activities and are actively involved in planning activities and outings. The school

has a youth club area for evening activities. The facilities in the youth club include several computer games consoles, including a Nintendo Wii, a driving game complete with steering wheel and seat and table football. There is a home cinema and other facilities for children to play games and undertake arts and crafts activities. Children's individual needs are thoroughly assessed and recorded in individual social plans, detailing the specific areas where support is needed and the measures the school has identified to meet those needs. Staff are trained in communication needs and emotional needs of children. Children feel that the staff are approachable and supportive.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Consulting with children and young people, listening to them, discussing decisions affecting their welfare with them, talking to them about how the school is run and helping children and young people to make decisions on matters that effect them is fully integrated into the care practices at the school. Children are consulted on matters affecting them on a regular basis through frequent house meetings, the school council and regular surveys on boarders' views. Key-workers complete annual reports as part of the review process of statements. These reports include clear sections on the views of children. Staff receive training in communication, ensuring that all children's views are ascertained. The school's quality assurance systems are centred around the experience of children and young people. The families of children and young people also feel listened to and are consulted regularly about things that matter. Children feel valued by the staff and value the work done by staff on their behalf. Staff are comfortable with their role of setting clearly understood boundaries for the children and young people while maintaining a high quality of relationship between themselves and the children. The school operates an extremely thorough admissions procedure, involving the obtaining of detailed information on each child; visits to professionals, previous schools and parents, as well as the child themselves; staggered visits before full admission and proactive allocation and visits by key workers. All admissions to the school are thoroughly planned and the child or young person and their family is fully involved in that planning. Children's welfare needs are met through the implementation of detailed individual plans, referred to by the school as 'individual social plans'. The plans are shared with boarders, who have a clear sense of ownership and understanding of the basics of the plans. The plans include clear and detailed sections on contact, ensuring children are enabled to maintain positive contact with their parents whilst living away from home. Reviews take place annually and the school produces detailed reports for these meetings that provide those involved with good information on the progress and needs of the child concerned. Children and young people are actively encouraged to participate in these reviews, are assisted to put forward their views and receive full information on the outcome of any review.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Children live in well designed and pleasant accommodation, which meets the needs of children boarding at the school. Accommodation is clean and well maintained. Lounges contain plenty of comfortable seating for the children to relax. There is also sufficient space in each unit for children and staff to sit together around the table for meals. The equipment in each area includes a plasma television, DVD/video and a computer linked to a printer. Games consoles are available for children to use. Pot plants, lamps, pictures, photographs, soft toys and other

homely touches contributed to a very pleasant environment for children. A variety of toys, books and games in children's bedrooms and in the lounges provides plenty of entertainment. The dining room has been fitted with new, purpose built round tables which allows children the opportunity to interact and staff to supervise children. Children are accommodated in shared and single bedrooms. Bedrooms are all decorated using an attractive colour scheme. Modern attractive furniture is provided and carpets and curtains are renewed when needed. Children choose their own duvets covers and pillow cases. Children are also encouraged to personalise their bedrooms with their own posters, photographs, drawings, soft toys and other possessions. Children speak very positively about their accommodation. The overall quality of the personal and communal accommodation ensures that the welfare of children is promoted and children feel valued and respected. The school takes positive steps to develop the facilities to meet the children's needs. The bathrooms, showers and toilets in the residential accommodation are warm and homely. Major refurbishment work took place during the summer holidays included the installation of eight new showers plus the complete tiling of the shower cubicles, ensuring that children are provided with private and modern facilities. Children's privacy is respected.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children, parents and others with responsibility for children are provided with a clear statement of the aims of the school, contained within the school prospectus. The statement incorporates key policy documents and gives insight about the way the school works with children. Children have access to a slide show about the school before starting, and a separate guide for children, entitled "Welcome to Wells Park" is available as a computer presentation or a booklet. The staff team are committed to professional development, as evidenced by the priority given to training and the requirements of the staffing policy which include a requirement for staff to undertake professional training. Staff have a good knowledge of the needs of individual children and have access to a wide range of detailed policies and guidance documents to assist them. Wells Park is organised into two discreet but integrated areas - education and care. The responsibility for management of education on a 24 hour day to day basis is delegated to the head of education, whilst the responsibility for care is delegated, on the same basis, to the head of care. These two officers, together with the director, form the senior management team which reports directly to the governors. Staff are well supported through regular professional supervision. The school recognises the need to present a consistent approach to the care, management and education of each child on a 24 hours basis. Teachers and Care Officers work closely together during the day and in the evenings to ensure that this approach is successful. Although the two aspects of the school are managed separately, in effect they function as one, presenting a co-ordinated approach to each child's needs. The school has an experienced and effective senior management team, who provide strong leadership of the residential provision. Staff reflect a clear understanding of, and commitment to, the aims of the school and its methods of working with the children. Staff feel very supported by the management team and senior staff. Staff comments include "I like coming in to work every day", "everyone grows here", "I feel empowered", "positive to see the changes in children and each other" and "there is very good support for any ideas we have". The head of care has been employed in various roles and has over eighteen years experience and has undertaken extensive training commensurate with the role. The school benefits from having trained NVQ assessors on the staff team and exceeds the minimum levels of care staff trained to NVQ level 3 in caring for children and young people. Staff benefit from a structured induction and training plan. Children benefit from the stability

and security of the school, as demonstrated by the thorough and detailed improvement plan for residential provision, which focuses on achieving the best possible outcomes for children.

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
----------	--------	----------

Recommendations

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

- ensure that where sanctions are imposed or physical intervention is used, children are encouraged to write or otherwise have their views recorded and sign their names against them, if possible, in the records kept by the school (NMS 10)
- ensure that the school’s system for recruiting staff, which should be verifiable in recruitment records held at the school, includes a reference request letter that specifically states that there should be no material mis-statement or omission relevant to the suitability of the applicant (NMS 27)
- ensure that the school’s system for recruiting staff, which should be verifiable in recruitment records held at the school, includes contact by the school, where possible, with each previous employer involving work with children or vulnerable adults to check the reasons the employment ended (NMS 27).

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for residential special school

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted (NMS 14)
- children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs (NMS 15)

Ofsted considers 14 the key standard to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled (NMS 3)
- children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration (NMS 4)
- the welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse (NMS 5)
- children are protected from bullying (NMS 6)
- all significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified to the appropriate authorities by the head of the school or designated person (NMS 7)
- children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return (NMS 8)
- children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour (NMS 10)
- children live in schools that provide physical safety and security (NMS 26)
- there is careful selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers (NMS 27)

Ofsted considers 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 26 and 27 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school (NMS 12)
- children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities within the school and in the local community (NMS 13)
- children receive individual support when they need it (NMS 22)

Ofsted considers 12 and 22 the key standards to be inspected.

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run; no child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views (NMS 2)
- children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect (NMS 9)
- children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes (NMS 11)

- children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school (NMS 17)
- in accordance with their wishes children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while at school (NMS 20)

Ofsted considers 2, 17 and 20 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children can wear their own clothing outside school time, can secure personal requisites and stationery while at school, and are helped to look after their own money (NMS 16)
- children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living (NMS 21)
- children live in well designed and pleasant premises, which provide sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs
- children live in accommodation which is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use (NMS 24)
- children are able to carry out their personal care in privacy and with dignity (NMS 25)

Ofsted considers the key standard to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils (NMS 1)
- children's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions (NMS 18)
- there are adequate records of the staff and child groups of the school (NMS 19)
- children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently (NMS 28)
- children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs (NMS 29)
- children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare (NMS 30)
- children receive the care and services they need from competent staff (NMS 31)
- children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools (NMS 32)
- the governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school (NMS 33)

Ofsted considers 1, 28, 31 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.