

Walton Hall

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Jackie Callaghan
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Walton Hall is a residential special school situated in a rural part of Staffordshire. It provides day and residential education to students aged 11 to 19 years who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities which includes aspects of autism, emotional and social behaviours and complex needs. The boarding provision is available for up to four nights per week. The residential units are situated in two buildings placed within the school's grounds. Goldstone House is a purpose-built unit offering accommodation to 10 girls. The Old Hall is a Victorian listed building and provides three residential units: Gainsborough, which offers seven full-time residential placements for senior boys; Broughton, which provides eight places for post 16 female students, and Shugborough, which accommodates nine post 16 students. The school is situated within its own extensive grounds, which offer a range of facilities including football, tennis and basketball. It has a motorcycle riding and maintenance area, an adventure play area, a small animal farm and a conservation area. These all contribute to the 24-hour curriculum approach.

Summary

At this announced, full inspection all the key standards were inspected. The outstanding recommendations made at the previous inspection were also followed up. The general organisation around working practices is good and the school functions well. Individual needs are recognised and plans are in place to address them. The promotion of equality and diversity is good throughout the standards inspected. Pupils enjoy being at Walton Hall school and benefit from professional and effective management. This coupled with a residential staff team who are skilled, knowledgeable and enthusiastic provides all pupils with stimulating and purposeful care. Four recommendations linked to staff training and rotas, risk assessments and behaviour management have been made.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the school was asked to provide more opportunities for pupils to discuss health and social relationships. To develop the behaviour management monitoring and reviewing processes and improve the systems for recruitment. The school use the services of a professional drama group to deliver sessions on sex and relationship education to the residential pupils. These sessions are dynamic and imaginatively capture pupils attention, which helps them to engage and deepen their understanding about keeping safe. The school have developed their behaviour management monitoring sheet to include the time, staff involved and the environment. These records now provide all of the information required to fully assess if any behavioural patterns or trends are occurring. This helps them to intervene early to support pupils and stop behaviours escalating. The school now have a robust system for ensuring that all the recruitment checks are undertaken prior to any staff member beginning employment. As a result, pupil's welfare is safeguarded.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils gain a superb understanding about the benefits of healthy living. They follow personal care routines with high levels of independence. The benefits of pupil's participation in positive

recreational experiences contribute to their physical, mental, social, and spiritual growth. Pupils explore the potential outcomes of sexual relationships and the wider social issues through exciting drama workshops. These meaningful sessions fully enable them to engage and truly begin to understand their emotions and feelings. Staff successfully encourage pupils to develop appropriate peer relationships by supporting them to develop self-belief and empathy. This promotes pupil's dignity and self-respect and gives them the confidence to appropriately access involvement within the community. Staff are aware of the appropriate procedures to follow and their competence to administer medication is continually assessed. Pupil's well-being is further promoted because residential staff are supported by a nurse that works at the school. This enables the school to meet the ever-changing and complex health care needs of some of its pupils and is a commendable working partnership. Pupils are consistently provided with a well-balanced diet. One pupil stated that 'we get lots of different foods'. Pupils enjoy the responsibility of clearing the tables and helping to wash up. Staff praise and encourage them to be involved, which helps the pupils to adopt a positive attitude towards food.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Pupil's privacy is respected as staff are sensitive to their needs and do not intrude unnecessarily. Pupils say they are very confident that their concerns are addressed and that they know about the complaints procedure. There is a very effective system in place to record any concerns made known, which successfully supports pupils and staff to work together to ensure care is continually appropriate. There are good systems in place to promote the safety and welfare of pupils, ensuring they are kept safe. All staff receive child protection training and have a deep understanding of what action to take regarding an allegation or suspicion of abuse. Pupils and staff know that bullying is not tolerated. The School are committed to securing equality of opportunity through the criteria of an environment in which individuals are treated on the sole basis of their relative merits and abilities. There are clear procedures for dealing with any incidents of discrimination or harassment. Pupils receive clear messages that bullying behaviour will be challenged and that these issues are discussed openly within the school to ensure everyone is protected. Pupils speak positively about the support they receive with one pupil commenting that 'I have never been bullied', demonstrating that pupil's well-being is given a high priority. There are systems in place for protecting pupils who are absent from the school without permission and for notifying and reporting significant events to relevant bodies. Pupils who exhibit any behaviours that may challenge them in the environment are supported through positive reinforcement to make changes in their behaviour. However, sanctions imposed require closer monitoring to ensure that the work set by way of 'lines' is in line with section 47 of the Education Act 1986 and is a suitable sanction for all pupils. Positive steps are taken to keep pupils, staff and visitors safe from fire and other hazards in the school. For example, records indicate that regular drills are undertaken and pupils are given the opportunity to participate. In addition, risk assessments on the environment are completed and updated on a regular basis. However, they do not cover how hazards linked to the ropes attached to the openers on the windows in Old Hall could be minimised. Walton Hall has effective procedures in place for monitoring all visitors to the school. No unauthorised person can access the building or gain access to pupils residing there. Staff personnel files confirm positive recruitment processes are in place to keep pupils safe. One parent commented that Walton Hall 'ensures that the experience makes boarders feel safe, secure, happy and valued'.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There is well established support of pupil's educational achievement by the boarding provision at school. Highly effective communication between classroom staff and residential staff promotes consistency for all pupils. Life skills and independence are key principles of the school which are deeply embedded and successfully promoted through the 24 hour curriculum. The school provides an immensely secure and structured community for all their pupils where they can fulfil their potential whilst learning to live and work together in a spirit of co-operation, kindness, respect and enthusiasm. One parent commented that the school 'give particular attention to individual need, our child loves staying at school, making and keeping friends, she loves the staff, the food and the activities'. Another parent stated that Walton Hall are 'great at meeting individual needs whether physical, emotional, social or educational'. Pupils, as the result of the education they receive are able to contribute constructively to society and play a full role in it, whatever their chosen path. Encouraging each pupil's moral and spiritual discovery and expression is an important part of the work of the school. Consequently, pupils develop confidence as the school is dynamic in creating an atmosphere of responsibility for each other, the community and the environment.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils are extremely well consulted about life at Walton Hall. Their views and preferences are overtly sought, including menu content, furnishings and activities. One parent wrote there is 'good liaison with parents, taking into account parents wishes, whilst ensuring the child's voice remains paramount'. Pupils are innovatively supported in their transition when they enter or leave the school. They learn wide ranging, important life skills such as cooking. They explore their potential and develop their personal interests because staff work in a very encouraging and supportive manner. As a result, pupil staff relationships are excellent. Pupils benefit from set routines and the challenges of living in an environment, where regard for others is important. They are highly engaged by learning that both develops and challenges them whilst exciting their imagination. They are consistently empowered to be morally aware enabling them to distinguish the principles between right and wrong within the code of each others cultures, for example, through the drama sessions for sex and relationship education. Pupils care and welfare is promoted superbly as meticulously detailed placement plans are in place. They cover an extensive range of important matters and are used in conjunction with behaviour plans and risk assessments. Pupils are proactively supported to have contact with friends and family where appropriate. The school understands the value and importance of communication and contact with parents. Significant time is taken to build relationships and share information with families. As a result, pupils thrive as they get consistent messages from both home and school.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Walton Hall school is located, designed and of a size and layout that is in keeping with its Statement of Purpose to meet the needs of all pupils placed there. It provides a consistent, stable, safe and caring environment that enables pupils to realise their potential academically, physically and socially. Pupils truly benefit from staying in residence as it promotes the encouragement of independence and long term emotional maturity. Staff spend a large majority

of their time being with the pupils, supporting their care and development. Resources and space are used effectively to maximise pupil's independence and provides them with a secure environment in which they build and develop trust.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The school provides a Statement of Purpose which clearly identifies the service provided to pupils whilst residing there. It is made available to all parents including potential families and relevant professionals. The Statement of Purpose is supported by child friendly guides which are in various easy read formats. There is good management of the school and of the residential provision within it. One parent writes in the pre-inspection questionnaires that 'my daughter thoroughly enjoys all aspects of school and hostel life. The staff are very committed and there is excellent leadership from the head teacher - it's not just about good teachers but the culture and atmosphere that as a team they create'. Pupils are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently. Staff are experienced, skilled and confident. Staffing levels are good and the senior management team largely deploy staff effectively to ensure that pupils have the adults they need to care for them. However, as the needs of the pupils residing become more complex staffing is becoming tight at times. Time is further impacted on as staff have to fulfil the requirements of their increasingly professional role. They ensure that reports and care plans are appropriately created and maintained to ensure that the pupil's ever-changing needs are continually met. A management structure is beginning to be embedded within the residential team. However, the working hours of the head of care and deputy means that time to undertake the important administrative tasks is being eroded. All of the staff team have the required National Vocational Qualification Level 3 (NVQ 3). Parental feedback was very complementary about the residential staff, for example, one parent commented that there is 'a very high standard of staffing'. Teamwork amongst staff is strong and there is a good training programme to ensure that staff are continually updated. However, pupils with more complex needs are beginning to be integrated into residence. This has caused a minor shortfall in the provision of training being given, as training does not always take into account that these pupils may display different behaviours when residing in school to those they display in a classroom environment. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Evidence supports a consistent commitment to improving equality and diversity in practice. Pupils are receiving a good individual service in the school which is designed to meet their personal needs. Pupils and staff enjoy the stability of an efficiently run school. Systems for monitoring the operation of the residential unit are good, and the school has an atmosphere of purposeful and imaginative direction. The head of care and head teacher have both established a pattern of management monitoring records, through which they analyse the performance of the residential staff in meeting their requirements. Walton Hall, as an organisation, has delegated the responsibility for its monthly review of welfare to an independent person from the local authority. These visits are supplemented by visits from other special schools' heads of care. Records indicate that these visits take place with appropriate regularity and some are unannounced. The visits provide excellent additional safeguarding mechanisms for pupils by looking at staff and management practices.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

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

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

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

- ensure that any measures taken to respond to unacceptable behaviour are appropriate to the age, understanding and individual needs of the child (NMS 10.5)
- ensure risk assessments are carried out and recorded in writing on the windows, this specifically applies to the windows in old hall (NMS 26.3)
- develop the training to address the appropriate response to and management of the individual children (29.6)
- review the staff rotas to ensure that enough time is scheduled so that all the components of standard 31.5 occur without compromising overall care of children (NMS 31.5).