

Wennington Hall School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Stephen Trainor
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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

The Lancashire Education Authority administers Wennington Hall School. The school provides an environment that can support up to 70 boys of secondary school age, 11 to 16, on a residential or day basis. The young people using the services provided at the school have experienced some difficulties associated with their academic, social, emotional and/or behaviour development which would make normal schooling inappropriate for them. The school provides a 38 week programme of education, with the young people in the main spending weekends at home or with their carers. The school is internally designed and of a size and layout that is in keeping with its Statement of Purpose. Each boarding house provides accommodation for small groups within well-designed and pleasant premises. There is sufficient space and resources to meet needs. Boarding houses are sensibly separated by age. Three boarding houses are located in the main school building, whilst the other two are situated close by in the school grounds. The school has excellent leisure and gym facilities. The grounds are fully utilised, enabling young people to pursue many leisure interests. The combined prospectus and parents handbook accurately describes the purpose and function of the school, outlining aims and objectives, philosophy of care and response to education. Education is regarded as the foundation stone to each pupil's future. The school has received a Learning Excellence Award for raising achievement and enjoyment for learners. The last Ofsted education inspection reflects very positively on the successes and achievements at Wennington Hall School. Academic achievement is to a high standard when considering the difficulties that many of the pupils have had in mainstream schools. A new vocational centre has been opened, further enhancing school resources and the range of qualifications that can be gained.

Summary

This inspection was announced. This report comments on every outcome heading covering all the key Residential Special School National Minimum Standards. The response taken by the management team to a recommendation made during the last inspection was evaluated. Issues affecting the school at the time of this inspection were discussed. This is an excellent service in every respect. The management team are highly motivated, qualified and competent. Practice is extremely well coordinated and fully embraces the government's Every Child Matters Framework, designed to improve services for children and young people. There is regular consultation and transparent communication with pupils and everyone supporting placements. Many positive comments have been received on services provided and the management and organisation of the school. All outcomes are recorded as being outstanding. Pupils achieve and develop academically and socially through learning opportunities and new experiences. Pupils experience healthy and stable lifestyles. They are extremely well focussed and take every opportunity to develop skills and prepare for their futures. Excellent relationships between staff and the pupils allow comprehensive programmes to be implemented. Pupils are relaxed in the safe and comfortable surroundings of the school and within their individual boarding houses. There is access to specialist support and services to ensure full placement needs are being met. There is a clear child-centred philosophy in operation at the school that puts the pupils firmly at the forefront of decision making and planning. There is good use of risk assessments to support individualised care planning and safeguarding support is established on many levels. The pupils are happy and well cared for. The school's operation is being monitored. Innovative thinking enables ongoing improvements to be identified that allow

further enrichment of experience of all pupils. This report highlights no recommendations to be considered to improve practice further.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The recommendation made at the last inspection has been suitably addressed. Senior members of the management team and two school governors have attended specific safeguarding training. This training complements previous training provided.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The promotion of health is taken seriously at Wennington Hall School. Pupils' welfare is closely monitored and their health needs are extremely well met. Looked After Children (LAC) health reviews are undertaken. Pupils are supported by a named LAC nurse who provides advice and guidance. There has been good success with vocational training courses linking healthy living and fitness. Catering, food preparation, diet and exercise all have a seamless supporting role within each pupil's health arrangements. Pupils' physical appearance and social presentation clearly show the benefits of leading a healthy lifestyle. Focus groups provide extra support for any pupil when help is needed. Pupils clearly articulate the support they receive linked to diet and exercise. The pupils confirm satisfaction with how health and well-being are being handled. Routine medical, optical and dental appointments are organised by key workers. Relationships have been established with the local doctors surgery where the pupils are registered. Pupils confirm that staff look after them when they are ill. The response to meeting pupils' health needs also involves accessing specialist support when needed. A health worker commented, 'All the young people that I have had sessions with at Wennington Hall School have always expressed that their physical and emotional needs are being met'. School health services support care staff and the education curriculum in the delivery of personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship. Information, as well as learning and developmental opportunities, is being provided. Smoking cessation and anti-bullying are ongoing programmes run at the school. Health fairs have also been organised and immunisation programmes undertaken. Findings contained within a parent survey completed in September 2008 agreed that the school has a very good student support and welfare policy. There is a policy and written guidance which is implemented in practice for administering, recording, storing and disposal of medication. Parental permission for administering medicines is gained. Medicines are being kept securely within lockable cabinets. Controlled drugs are stored in a double locked cabinet. Records are being kept on all medication, treatment and first aid given. Staff have been suitably trained. They have also attended specialist training to support pupils with specific medical needs. Ongoing consultation with health professionals takes place to ensure practice remains safe. The head of care has overall responsibility for managing all medicines at the school. Procedures operated are well thought out. Each pupil has a detailed health plan subject to regular review. Up-to-date health information is held. The efforts to support young people's health and well-being are well recorded. Information can be located quickly within case files. Key workers are aware of health needs and have been successful in providing services to meet needs. The inspector was made welcome, allowing pleasant mealtimes to be experienced with sensible conversation. Meals were found to be varied, healthy and nutritionally balanced and include favourite food preferences of the pupils. The catering manager ensures boys' birthdays are

celebrated. Special themed meals support work on looking at cultural diversity. The meals offered are to a high standard. Pupils expressed their full satisfaction with the quality of meals. The school has gained the Lancashire Healthy Schools Award and National Healthy Schools status. Healthy eating plans, diet and exercise programmes and an Accredited Sports Mark also contributed to these achievements. Communication is effective in ensuring anyone with special medical or dietary needs is identified. The kitchen and catering was reported to operate to a good standard following the latest Environmental Health inspection.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

This school provides a very safe environment where pupils achieve and develop to their full potential. The arrangements for complaints, safeguarding children, bullying and behaviour management are handled extremely well and ensure that pupils feel listened to and protected. No concerns were highlighted. The senior management team regularly monitors and evaluates practice. Developments and improvements are constantly introduced using innovative ideas. Records are accurately maintained showing the school is managed well, providing suitable physical safety and security for the pupils resident. Staff practice was observed to respect the pupils privacy, as is consistent with good parenting and the need to protect children. Information held on the pupils is handled safely in line with policy. Staff keep information safe and secure. Staff are clear on the arrangements for sharing information for safeguarding purposes. Reporting systems and actions taken in the past in response to significant incidents have been appropriate. There is a clear school policy and procedures for responding to allegations or suspicions of abuse. Staff have received training and are capable of responding to child protection matters. Senior management staff and school governors with responsibility for child protection/safeguarding have received specific training within the past year. This training complements and builds upon the past safe and transparent practice. Practice clearly links into and is consistent with local safeguarding team protocols. There have been no safeguarding matters directly related to the school between inspections. Complaints are clearly listened to. Written information available throughout the school enables the boys to form a complaint if they wish to. Complaints procedures have been publicised widely and are included in pupil induction. Staff also ensure procedures are discussed periodically via key worker systems operated. Pupils are confident that complaints would be taken seriously, with their views and opinions listened to. All levels of complaints are taken seriously with a record of the actions taken to resolve them being produced. This school makes every effort to reduce the impact of bullying on pupils. Pupils indicate they have no serious concerns about bullying and they feel safe at the school. Many pupils commented, 'Bullies are dealt with by staff.' Pupils unanimously state that they have someone to talk to if they were bullied and they were confident that staff would respond to any matters highlighted by them. Monitoring of the school's operation has led to quick identification of concerns. An anti-bullying 'focus group' has been operated at this school for many years. Detailed risk assessments are produced to highlight concerns and vulnerability of the pupils at the school. Detailed behaviour management plans are produced to support staff practice. Information held on the pupils is comprehensive, respected and confidentially handled. Computerised records held on the pupils are extensive, allowing different behaviours to be monitored. A detailed record is held on every individual at the school. Programmes are monitored and responses coordinated efficiently. Staff have proved to be competent, between inspections, in supporting the young people's needs. All staff receive training in suitable methods and techniques to be used if physical intervention is needed. Quality assurance measures mean that school governors check that incidents are being managed

safely. The response to health, safety and security is well coordinated. Fire and Rescue Services visit the school ensuring fire precautions are safe. Advice, when provided, is followed. The scheduled annual visit was planned for the end of September following this inspection. The school operates a health and safety committee who meet regularly. Servicing contracts for electrical, gas and fire safety are established. Boilers are serviced. Personal appliance testing is routinely undertaken ensuring all electrical equipment is safe. This includes the boys' personal electrical items. Risk assessments have been carried out on all aspects of the school premises and grounds. No hazards were observed. The response taken to ensure all activities undertaken remain safe is subject to robust risk assessment procedures. All high risk activities are carried out with qualified instructors. Parental consents are gained. Risks associated with challenging activities are clearly being minimised. A robust checking system is evident throughout the recruitment process. Suitable evidence including Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks, references, qualifications, applications forms and records of the interview were presented on a random selection of staff. A suitable rationale is demonstrated where staff have been appointed with cautions or old convictions. This practice is acceptable. Suitable vetting of visitors to the school is also undertaken with identity checks being carried out before access is permitted. The pupils know that all visitors should be wearing official passes and contact staff if they have any concerns.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Staff practice engages the pupils in education and an extensive range of activities to develop skills and individual potential through new experiences. There is good evidence that each individual is fulfilling their own potential in an environment appropriate to his special education needs. Pupils have learnt to live and work as a member of a multi-cultural society, accepting its discipline and responsibilities and respecting the rights and needs of others. It is clear that a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum needed to support the pupils in acquiring knowledge, skills and understanding is being delivered. They are being prepared with skills relevant to adult life and the world of work and leisure. Education is actively promoted. Education and care staff continue to work together closely, providing a seamless response to individuals' educational and welfare needs. There are nine teaching assistants available to provide additional pupil support and guidance. Staff members feel that the service does well commenting that it, 'Promotes every aspect of the 24 hour curriculum'. Information technology is utilised allowing pupil progress to be monitored. There has been good GCSE academic success and good achievements within the vocational study centre. Education at this school is made as interesting as possible. A staff member commented, 'Our hope is to give pupils the best care and education in order to put them on the right path for the future'. Other comments included, 'The whole ethos is to help the boys achieve to the best of their ability, both in the academic sense and in terms of their leisure time where they are offered superb opportunities'. Findings from this inspection confirm successful outcomes are being achieved. The pupils enthusiastically discuss the positive experiences they gain. Timely individual support is provided, ensuring that the pupils prepare for their future. Support is coordinated within a multidisciplinary framework meaning that they make good progress. Many positive comments were made by the pupils on independent living programmes operated at the school. The knowledge that staff hold enables an individual response to be taken when the pupils are most in need. The individual and collective needs of the pupils were clearly being met at this school. Staff practice engages the pupils in an extensive range of activities. Developing skills and individual potential through new recreational experiences are clearly linked to educational attainment and the vocational

department. Pupils are continuously supported to develop, achieve and prepare for the time they leave. Pupils and their parents confirm satisfaction in how services are provided. Staff efforts and enthusiasm are clearly valued. School resources are exceptional. Equipment is high specification and well maintained. Staff holding suitable qualifications and experience undertake all activities. The planning, budgetary control and the investment in activities and individual pursuits within the school are areas in which staff and management excel. The school is accredited as a centre of excellence. The range of recreational activities and the constructive manner in which staff engage with pupils has led to many community based developments. Pupils are now planning and leading events for local primary schools. One head teacher commented, 'We feel very lucky to be able to work so closely with Wennington Hall School, its staff and pupils. Great expertise which is shared'. Pupils develop their own leadership skills whilst school children gain many new life experiences.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Staff's effective ongoing consultation maintains positive relationships throughout the school placement. Parents are provided with regular school updates, letters and reports on their child's progress. Meetings are convened if there are any concerns. Statutory reviews take place. Partnership agreements that pupils, parents and staff at Wennington Hall School sign up to are taken seriously. Parents confirm that school rules are being discussed, they are encouraged to visit and are made welcome. The school management team also facilitate communication through the school website, school prospectus, parental handbook, e-mails, school reports and newsletters, telephone and face-to-face meetings. The school has clear and effective systems in place relating to pupils being admitted to and leaving the school. All introductions are planned. All parties are clear on the school's philosophy of care and expectations on behaviour. High standards have been maintained for many years. Detailed placement and education plans are in place. These are effectively implemented on a day-to-day basis. Monitoring the arrangements in place for each pupil is an area where the school excels. There has been suitable investment in computer software to support monitoring. The school environment is extremely relaxed. Staff routinely seek to build working relationships with the young people, parents and other professionals involved in pupils' lives. A recent parent survey provided mostly positive comment on practice. Transparent management practice also views and responds to any concerns highlighted by parents. All parents agreed that they can contact the school about concerns. Parents also stated that they feel well informed as to what is happening in the school and the communication is good. Head teachers from partnership schools and health professionals confirm close involvement and excellent communication. There is clear pupil involvement in everything that occurs at this school. The school operates a boys' council that has elected members from each school year. There are school prefects and an elected head boy. Pupils enthusiastically discuss their roles as librarians and assistant librarians. There is a great deal of 'pride in performance' from pupils who are provided with clear guidance on their duties. Weekly house meetings also take place where pupils' views and opinions are being listened to. Age appropriate written guidance has been produced for all the pupils to guide them through their time at the school.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Wennington Hall School is stable and clearly fit for purpose. This school is safe and pleasantly decorated, providing sufficient space and excellent resources to meet needs. An extremely positive initial impression is gained when driving through the school grounds and when viewing the accommodation. The boarding provision comprises of five separate houses. The standard of each boarding house is first class. Maintenance of the whole school site is coordinated well. A rolling programme of refurbishment and development ensures that the excellent appearance is maintained. Consultation with the pupils occurs, when appropriate to do so, on plans and developments at the school. School development plans highlight the numerous improvements and developments that have taken place as well as those that are planned for the future. The school's budget is managed wisely. This is a dynamic, progressive thinking school that has been visited by the inspector annually for the past nine years. Everything is done to a very high standard. Pupils gain the best possible experiences, opportunities and care throughout their placement. The significant development of a vocational centre, opened during the previous academic year, has elevated pupil experience to a different level. Pupils gain many practical skills whilst undertaking five accredited courses. This centre undoubtedly complements national curriculum subjects in providing a more rounded education. Staff also provide an important link to the development of pupils through independence training. This training is evident throughout the time each pupil spends at the school. Formal programmes are operated in line with placement needs. One boarding house is designed around proving an extremely focussed approach to independence. The school ethos is encouraging personal growth and development. Based on the commitment shown by the pupils to their programmes this is being achieved. They work extremely hard with staff to gain skills suitable for the time that they leave. They recognise the skills and qualities that future employers would be looking for. Transition plans are being produced. Personal advisors, Connexions advisors and educational staff support the arrangements in place. Daily life at the school provides the pupils with many opportunities, appropriate to their age and need, for the development of knowledge and skills.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The headmaster and the senior management team provide excellent support in maintaining a competent well qualified workforce. Staff morale is excellent. Staff enthusiasm is infectious allowing the school to remain an extremely interesting place for the pupils to live. There is an ability to reflect on practice and implement ongoing developments. Developments taking place at this school are creative, innovative and keep the school at the forefront of practice. An exceptional quality of service is provided. There is a comprehensive development plan outlining how the school's operation will be maintained. Pupils developmental needs are clearly being met. A head teacher commented that practice gives the students the confidence to succeed in life. The school's operations are being monitored closely by governors and independent visitors who report their findings in a transparent way. Consultation with professionals external to the school's operation provides many positive comments to support inspection judgements. One head teacher summarised with the following statement, 'The school is well led and managed. I always feel that there is an air of calm with expectations for behaviour known and shared by all. There is a positive team spirit which promotes success.' The staff and management team have a wealth of experience and extensive range of qualifications. Staff practice remains consistent despite some new appointments being made between inspections. The staff team understand and have skills to support the needs of the pupils. A staff member commented, 'Everyone has down days but these are soon washed away by the support of the great teamwork and generally happy faces of the pupils.' Practice meets with the requirements of National

Minimum Standards. All five years of pupils attending this school are settled. Staff commented that the team approach has had a tremendous stabilising effect for the pupils. Staff are extremely well motivated. Deployment of staff is good. Rotas demonstrate that staffing levels are being maintained. Staff are clear about their roles, balancing their work so that the individual and collective needs of the pupils are met whilst ensuring that the necessary administrative tasks are undertaken. Records at this school show a clarity of purpose in how staff are being managed. It is evident that induction and foundation training are being provided. Training, support and supervision are good and clearly linked to staff's personal development. The school has the full range of policies as outlined within Appendix 3 of the National Minimum Standards for Special Residential Schools. Policies and procedures at the school are both accessible and known to staff. Practice is fully reflective of the guidance provided in these documents. Guidance is regularly reviewed and updated when necessary. Documents have been produced in a user-friendly format designed to be appealing to the reader. Permanent, accurate records are maintained on pupil progress. There have been many successes to date.

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):

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.