

# Woolton High School

Inspection report for residential special school

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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**

This residential special school is owned and managed by a local authority. It provides education and residential facilities to boys only. The school is able to take up to 22 day pupils, some of whom make use of the residential facilities. In addition some pupils stay for extended school days. They remain at school for their evening meal and participate in activities.

The school has recently moved to brand new purpose-built accommodation. Residential facilities of a high standard are currently provided in two detached buildings with another nearing completion.

### **Summary**

The school was given two days notice of this full inspection that examined the school's performance against all the main national minimum standards relating to this provision. Four young people were present in the residential accommodation, all of whom participated directly in the inspection.

The school provides effective child-centred care for the young people who stay there. The residential staff team is well trained and well supported to provide care that promotes the strengths of each young person.

Young people feel safe when at the school and have developed strong and supportive relationships with the staff who care for them. Young people themselves recognise the progress they have made in their educational and personal development whilst at the school. They appreciate the structure and boundaries that are in place and the openness and assistance they have from staff. Staff promote positive behaviour and encourage young people to take responsibility for their own behaviour and to recognise the impact of their behaviour on others.

There is a strong commitment to the achievement of each young person's educational potential and an effective approach by all staff to supporting young people to improve.

The new accommodation provides an attractive and safe environment for young people and staff. It enhances self esteem and offers young people a warm and attractive place to live. Staff work with parents and others to ensure young people are healthy.

There are a number of areas of practice and procedure where the school has not been sufficiently aware of the application of the national minimum standards relating to residential special schools. There are some basic omissions to practice such as lack of a statement of purpose and of monitoring visits conducted on behalf of the governors. Key staff are not sufficiently aware of the national minimum standards. Although this has not impacted directly on practice and outcomes for young people are generally good, the activities of the school in working within good practice requirements are not clearly evidenced even though young people receive effective support and supervision. It is not clear, from records for example, how young people have been involved in the planning and delivery of the care they receive.

Some other aspects of record keeping, such as responses to concerns about a young person's safety, and staff's understanding of the implications of issues such as the need to obtain medical consent from people with parental responsibility and the impact of restrictions of contact for

young people compromise the ability of the school to show how it provides the care that young people actually receive.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

The school has responded positively and quickly to five of the six recommendations that were made at the last inspection. One recommendation relating to the response of the school to allegations and disclosures has been made again.

Health care plans now provide all the information to assist the school to administer safely any medication required by young people. A system now exists for all written references obtained as part of staff recruitment to be verified directly. Young people's risk assessments are updated to take account of behaviour such as bullying. Recording of physical restraints is completed on the correct documents. Information about young people is obtained to assist the completion of pre-admission risk assessments and care plans.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is satisfactory.

The school recognises that the primary responsibility for the health of its pupils rests with their parents and carers. At the same time however the school understands the importance of health care and health promotion as part of its daily activity. Information about a young person's health is obtained from parents, carers and other professionals. This information is used to create the care and health support plan that is compiled for each young person. It forms the basis for the support that young people receive from staff. It enables staff to understand their health needs and the actions staff need to take to promote effective health care.

The regular discussions between young people and their designated key worker cover issues relating to health and this enables staff to monitor progress and to identify areas of concern. Staff support young people in accessing any health care they may require. They work closely with parents to ensure they are kept informed and consulted at all times. Young people are provided with information, guidance and resources to give them the information that will enable them to take responsibility for their own health care. Smoking cessation for example is given a high priority.

The school does not obtain, and retain on each young person's file, prior written permission from a person with parental responsibility for that young person for the school to seek medical, optical or dental treatment when required. This compromises the ability of the school to ensure young people are given appropriate health care as soon as it is needed, particularly in an emergency or when a parent cannot be contacted.

Staff administer prescribed medication that young people bring from home. They have not however been trained in the administration of such medication by an appropriately qualified person. They may therefore be not fully aware of all requirements of such procedures to ensure full compliance and maximum safety for young people.

Staff encourage young people to eat healthily and to understand the importance of a healthy diet. Young people are encouraged to be involved in the selection of the food that is available

both in the main school and in the residential units. Mealtimes are seen as enjoyable social occasions taken in attractive and homely surroundings. Young people are encouraged to shop for and prepare and cook food when staying at the school and this, together with the commitment of the school to healthy eating, means a wide variety of food is available and appreciated.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is satisfactory.

The care provided by staff ensures that young people are safe whilst at the school. Young people clearly feel safe when using the residential facility. They are confident that staff will respond to their concerns and they are aware that the school has a range of procedures and set responses to any behaviour such as when a young person is missing from school and to any incidents of bullying. Staff promote positive behaviour and respond firmly and effectively to negative behaviour. Young people understand the expectations that guide their behaviour and respond well to the structure this gives them.

The school gives a high priority to safeguarding young people and the support provided by staff gives young people security. This is based on the high levels of individual attention that staff provide in a sensitive and caring way. The procedures underpinning the safeguarding practice are not however always appropriate to the task or are not implemented effectively.

Key staff, for example, are not aware of the need to notify events relating to the protection of young people to the appropriate authorities and some are not fully aware of the national minimum standards relating to the residential provision of the school. Although young people are confident in approaching staff about any concern or complaint they may have the recording of their complaints and information about the response taken by staff does not always describe the actions that were taken and the outcome of any investigation. It is not therefore possible to determine if the decision about the outcome of the complaint is reasonable and understood by the complainant. Young people and parents are not routinely provided with information about the complaints procedure such as would be in the young person's "Welcome Pack".

Similarly, records do not always provide clear evidence of the action taken by the school in response to concerns expressed by parents about behavioural or safeguarding issues involving their children. Although staff can describe the actions they have taken to ensure young people are safe there is no evidence of their response or its outcome in the records kept by the school. There are no clear procedures for staff to follow in circumstances such as this.

A further example is provided by the school's recording of sanctions imposed on young people for inappropriate behaviour. Young people are aware of the rules governing their behaviour and staff apply those rules consistently and fairly. This gives young people the security of clear expectations about their behaviour. The records of sanctions imposed do not however provide information to enable the school to identify any patterns in incidents leading to sanctions and do not provide clear evidence of the young person's response to the outcome as decided by the school.

The brand new premises that the school now occupies provide all pupils and young people using the residential accommodation with high levels of safety and security. There are clear procedures for ensuring full compliance with all aspects relating to health and safety.

Although no staff have been recruited to the residential unit since the last inspection the school's recruitment procedures mean that all people working at the school are carefully selected and vetted to ensure they are safe to work with children.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

The residential provision actively supports young people's educational progress at the school. Care staff and education staff work together to contribute to individual educational progress. Care staff ensure young people attend school regularly, are punctual and are supported where necessary throughout the day. Time set aside for the completion of homework is built in to the day after school has finished. Residential staff are vigilant in establishing the homework each young person has and encourage them to ensure its completion. The new residential accommodation provides plenty of space and equipment, both in communal and private areas, for quiet working.

Residential staff and teaching staff work together to identify means of encouraging each young person's personal, social and educational development. Care staff contribute to the annual review of a young person's educational progress to ensure consistency and continuity of care and education. The systems for effective communication between residential key workers and teaching staff of the young people for whom they are responsible are not always felt to assist direct and effective communication between these groups of staff.

A wide range of structured activities is arranged for each day after school. This can involve activity within school such as in the gym, or away from school on visits, trips to the cinema or sporting activities. Young people staying in the residential accommodation are together with pupils on extended days and they all participate in and clearly enjoy the experiences they have, and the support they receive from staff.

The school provides young people with individualised support in line with their needs and abilities. Staff work closely as they can with parents and appropriate professionals to establish the support each young person needs that will promote all aspects of their personal, social and educational development. Young people obviously appreciate the care and attention staff give to them and they are able to describe how they have changed since being at the school. One young person said, for example, "This is the best school I have ever been in. The staff are great and are here to help you." Another said "I am happy staying on residence. The staff are fantastic and it's just good to be here."

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff encourage young people to be actively involved in making decisions about their care and the running of the school. They support young people's meetings on the residential units, engage with them regularly through their key worker sessions and assist them to become members of the school council. Informal contact between staff and young people demonstrates that young people feel comfortable and confident in talking with staff about their concerns.

One of the themes running through many aspects of the school's practice is however the lack of routine recording detailing the nature and extent to which young people are actually involved. There is no written contribution on key records, and no facility for recording views on records

such as risk assessments, care plans and key worker summaries and reviews. There is little to evidence that young people have been encouraged to contribute and be involved, and what their views are.

Relationships between staff and young people are respectful, informal yet structured. There are clear expectations about young people's behaviour. Staff respond sensitively, quietly and effectively and ensure young people understand the impact of their behaviour on others. Young people are praised for their achievements and this promotes the development of self esteem and pride in themselves. The deployment of staff ensures that young people can receive individual care when this is required. The expectations of behaviour and the general ethos of the residential provision is set at the time of admission. Young people are given opportunity, often through participation in the extended day, to become familiar with the accommodation, staff and other young people.

Each young person has a written care plan that sets out their needs and how they will be cared for. Every young person has a designated key worker who is primarily responsible for their care and with whom they can develop a secure and trusting relationship. The key worker and young person have regular meetings to review progress and discuss areas of concern. The reports of these meetings provide valuable information that is used to review and re-assess the progress made by each young person. Young people are able to recognise and describe the changes in their behaviour and maturity during the time at the school.

Most young people who stay in residence live with their families or other carers. Staff promote contact with significant people and consult with them routinely during the week or if specific issues arise. Young people themselves can contact parents at any reasonable time when they are staying in the residential units. The school's records do not clarify the legal basis of any restrictions of contact with parents, family members or other people that may be imposed by a court. Staff are not clear about their responses to situations where such restrictions may be in place. This lack of understanding may have consequences for a young person's safety or well being, or the way in which the school deals with situations that may arise on the premises.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Young people wear their own clothing outside school time. They are helped to buy their own toiletries and small items and are given help and support in looking after their own money. Staff support young people to develop self-care skills and give them opportunities to become aware of the issues that will face them when they leave school. Young people are encouraged to be positive about the next step in their lives and to take all the opportunities that may arise. This encouragement given by staff helps promote self awareness and supports young people in the development of their confidence. Staff work with other agencies, such as Connexions, to ensure young people are given as much advice and guidance as may be available.

The new accommodation for the whole school provides a safe and attractive environment in which young people are educated and in which some of them stay during the week. Although some building work is yet to be completed the new premises are clearly appreciated by staff and young people. Each young person has, for example, their own single en-suite bedroom. Communal spaces such as living rooms and dining rooms are homely, warm and well furnished. Young people clearly like where they live and are able to recognise and describe how it makes



them feel valued. Staff comment on how the overall environment has a positive affect on young people's behaviour and the development of the respect they have for themselves and for others.

## Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The new school does not yet have a statement of purpose. This means that no information is available about what the school sets out to do for the young people it accommodates or how it provides care in the new premises. Other important information such as admission criteria and the name of the designated member of staff for child protection is therefore also not available and against which the school can measure its performance.

Although records are kept for each young person in both the main school and the residential accommodation these do not contain basic information such as who has parental responsibility for each young person, any information about restrictions of contact or legal status such as may be imposed by a court where relevant.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff have a clear understanding of young people's individual needs, strengths and circumstances. They encourage young people to capitalise on their strengths. There is a strong emphasis on developing each young person's sense of self esteem.

The residential provision supports the educational and personal development of the young people who use it. The staff team is well trained and well supported to develop the skills and knowledge required to meet the varied needs that young people have. The staff provide young people with child-centred and sensitive support that builds on young people's strengths and provides them with clear structure and boundaries. Staff work well together to provide a consistency of care. Staff are available to ensure effective safety, support and supervision.

Monitoring visits on behalf of the governing body do not take place and the school was not aware of the requirement for them to be undertaken. No reports have therefore been produced for the governing body. This omission has meant that monitoring of significant areas of practice and the evaluation of the care that is provided has been not fully undertaken.

However young people comment on and appreciate the help they have from staff over their time in the school. Outcomes for young people are good, staff contribute positively to young people's development and there is a commitment to developing practice.

## 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 the school obtains, and retains on file for each child, prior written permission from a person or body with parental responsibility for the school to seek medical, optical or dental treatment where required (NMS 14)
- ensure that medication given to young people at the school is given by competent and appropriately trained staff (NMS 14)
- ensure that all significant events relating to the protection of young people at the school are notified by the Head or designated person to the appropriate authorities (NMS 7)
- ensure that a written record is kept of the nature of any complaint made, the action taken and the outcome and that young people and their parents are told how they can make any complaint directly to Ofsted (NMS 4)
- ensure that the school's procedures for responding to suspicions of abuse to or concerns about a young person are based on and include all the requirements set out at Appendix 1 of the national minimum standards for residential special schools (NMS 5)
- review the systems for communication between care and education staff to ensure they are familiar with the care and education needs and progress of children in their care (NMS 12)
- ensure that the opinions and views of young people are actively sought and taken into account when decisions affecting their welfare are made (NMS 2)
- ensure that any restrictions of contact imposed by a court are clear and understood by staff and are implemented where necessary (NMS 20)
- ensure the school has a written statement of purpose that accurately describes what it sets out to do for young people it accommodates and the manner in which care is provided (NMS 1)
- ensure that each young person has a permanent record of their circumstances, history and progress that includes information about who has parental responsibility for them, any court orders affecting their care and any restrictions of contact or communication applicable to them (NMS 18)
- ensure that the governing body arranges for a representative to visit the school once every half term and to complete a written report on the conduct of the school. (NMS 33)