

# West Kirby Residential School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC018958
<b>Inspection date</b>	11 November 2009
<b>Inspector</b>	Jeffrey Banham
<b>Type of Inspection</b>	Key

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	18 November 2008

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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 school is a special educational needs college for young people with complex and significant behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Many young people also have additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including speech and language, autistic spectrum disorder and associated medical needs. All pupils have experienced major difficulties in mainstream schools and other educational settings.

The school has residential provision for up to 30 young people during weekdays in term time. There is a variety of boarding arrangements available depending on the needs of the child, ranging from one to four nights each week. The school provides residential accommodation on the main site and in two houses in the local area.

The location of the school and the houses enables young people to access facilities in the community easily. They are close to bus stops, a train station, leisure centres, swimming pools, youth clubs, shops, the beach, parks and other schools.

### **Summary**

This full inspection was carried out after the school had been given two days notice. All the main national minimum standards for residential special schools were assessed. Young people participated in the inspection both indirectly through written questionnaires or directly through contact and conversations with the inspector.

The school gives young people, who have varied and sometimes complex needs, sensitive, structured and effective support. Staff actively promote their health care and are able to involve a wide range of resources from within the school and other relevant agencies, to ensure appropriate care is available. The school does not always obtain clear delegated consent from a person with parental responsibility to enable it to seek medical treatment when required.

Young people are safe when staying at the school. The school has a set of detailed procedures for safeguarding and staff are well trained and aware of their responsibilities to promote safe care at all times. The management of young people's behaviour is a strength of the school's provision. It has committed an impressive set of resources to provide structured and consistent support to which young people clearly respond. The school identifies young people's strengths and uses these to achieve change. Young people are given encouragement to take responsibility for their own behaviour and to participate in all aspects of their care and the operation of the environment in which they live. The school does not always obtain two informative written references on staff it seeks to recruit.

The school gives a high priority to educational achievement. Young people are given care and attention from all the staff involved with them throughout the school. The residential provision actively supports the educational development of young people and this helps them to achieve their educational potential.

Effective team working is a feature of the school and all staff are clearly committed to securing the best for the young people with whom they work. They offer young people enthusiastic support to which they clearly respond and say they recognise and appreciate.

The residential accommodation in the community is excellent and demonstrates the commitment the school holds to valuing young people, enhancing their self esteem and providing good outcomes for them whenever it can. Some aspects of the residential accommodation in the main school do not fully provide a homely environment appropriate to young people's needs and the distinction between school and residence is sometimes blurred.

The school is well managed and has a demonstrable commitment to evaluating its practice and the continuous development of its provision. Staff are enthusiastic and committed to achieving the best for the young people in their care. They are well supported and well trained to help them to meet the sometimes challenging needs that young people have. Recording practice is not always consistently applied and some young people's records do not demonstrate who has parental responsibility for them. Visits on behalf of the governing body are not always undertaken with the required frequency; nor do they always evidence what has taken place during them.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

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

One recommendation was made at the last inspection. This was about the need for the school to ensure it notified the appropriate authorities about specific incidents relating to child protection. The procedure has been revised and all notifications are now made.

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

The provision is good.

The school has a range of policies, practices and procedures to support the health care of young people. Staff give a high priority to ensuring that every young person has a health care plan that sets out their particular needs and the actions that are to be taken to ensure that those needs are met. The health care plan gives staff comprehensive information about each young person and enables key workers to offer individual assistance and guidance. The plans are drawn up using information supplied by parents, health care professionals and the young people themselves. They are regularly reviewed to ensure they are appropriate to developing circumstances and reflect the progress that is made.

The school provides resources such as speech and language therapy, nursing staff and psychologists to meet the diverse range of needs that the students have. In addition, staff work closely with, and access, other specialist provision such as paediatricians, psychiatrists and dieticians to meet more complex conditions.

Staff provide young people with information and advice to enable them to take as much responsibility for their own health care as their needs and abilities will allow. They encourage young people to live healthy lifestyles and help them with sensitive issues such as sexual health, drug and alcohol use, exercise and diet. Emotional health is also considered to be important and staff help young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties within the framework of detailed assessments and health plans.

The systems for managing the administration of medication are sound and ensure that young people receive the treatment they are prescribed to promote their health. The school has a team of qualified nurses to offer staff training and guidance and to give young people effective

health care support. Nursing staff ensure that the administration of medication conforms to established safe practice throughout the education and residential provision of the school.

The systems for obtaining prior written permission from a person with parental responsibility to enable staff to seek medical treatment for a child are not yet fully developed. This may impact on the ability of the school to provide young people with the medical care that they may require. Documentation does not identify who has parental responsibility for each young person. People who care for children but who do not have parental responsibility, such as a foster carer signing, or a non birth parent are sometimes giving consent. Consent forms for non-prescribed medication are not always signed.

The school promotes healthy eating. Staff encourage young people to try a variety of foods and encourages them in choosing their own and their group's meals. Specialist diets are provided for those with dietary needs. Young people are encouraged to take part in buying and cooking the food that they eat. Breakfasts and evening meals are taken on the residential units. Young people clearly enjoy the social element of mealtimes and respond to the efforts staff put in to make all aspects of food positive for those involved.

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

The provision is good.

The school is committed to ensuring that the safety of young people is at the heart of the ways in which they care for them. Detailed policies are implemented by staff who are well trained and aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding. Training for staff is comprehensive and refreshed regularly. Staff respect the privacy of young people and maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality. They take the concerns of young people seriously and young people know who to go to and how to complain if they are unhappy or if there are any incidents of bullying. Concerns about possible child protection issues are dealt with quickly and thoroughly. The school has good links with the local safeguarding board and this helps to ensure that all safeguarding procedures are up to date and appropriate. The school is diligent in informing the relevant authorities of any significant events and responds promptly and within agreed local protocols to any young person who is missing from the school.

Measures of control are based on encouraging acceptable behaviour. The school's practice in this area is one of its key attributes and leads to demonstrable progress being made by young people over their stay at the school. Individual strengths and needs are identified. Risk assessments are effective and reviewed regularly and these underpin the behaviour support plan that informs the involvement of all staff with each young person. The school has dedicated significant resources to behaviour management, including a behaviour support suite within the main building and a specialist team to offer all staff and young people support, guidance and advice. The management of behaviour is based on the promotion of positive responses and a consistent approach from all staff throughout the school.

The use of sanctions is appropriate, monitored regularly and discussed with each young person to ensure they are aware of what has happened and why. Young people respond to this approach and are able to articulate the rationale for rules, some of which they are instrumental in devising for themselves. Staff record the sanctions that are imposed but it is not always clear if young people have had their views recorded and signed to confirm that it has happened.

Health and safety procedures are robust and all staff are involved in ensuring that the premises and activities are safe for young people, staff and visitors. The school has risk assessments for all aspects of safety of the premises and grounds, gas and electrical installations, fire safety and young people's activities.

Procedures governing the selection of staff are rigorously applied and help to ensure that the staff employed to work in the school are safe to work with young people. The school ensures that written references are obtained and these are validated by direct telephone contact. The references, from staff recruitment and employment agencies for example, do not always provide information to assist the school in deciding on the suitability of that applicant.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The school provides young people with excellent support to assist them in achieving their potential in educational and personal development. This support is based on detailed knowledge of each young person's strengths and learning needs. Staff work with young people and involve them in setting their own targets for developing their educational achievements and practical skills. Staff are aware of the need for a consistent and measured approach to the setting and achieving of specific targets. Success in achieving these targets builds young people's confidence and promotes their self esteem. Young people appreciate the support they receive and are able to understand the progress they have made while being at the school.

Staff on the residential unit actively support each young person's development. They emphasise the importance of education and work to provide a physical and emotional environment in which education is valued. Staff throughout the school work well together. Effective communication helps to develop a team-based approach. The school is able to call upon a wide range of resources such as speech and language therapists to help in the critical area of the development of communication skills.

Staff use the key worker system to develop detailed knowledge of the young people for whom they care and to build relationships with young people based on positive contact and the raising of self esteem. Staff encourage young people to develop self awareness and to consider the implications of their actions and their responsibilities to the wider community. They involve young people in considering not only their own care plans but also the activities and actions of the group in which they live.

A key feature in the development of self esteem is the involvement of young people in leisure activities, both within school and in the community. Staff encourage young people to be involved in the planning of activities and to develop new interests in things that will support their development and provide them with enjoyment.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Staff provide young people with a range of opportunities to be involved in all aspects of their care and living arrangements while they are at the school. Young people are able to access a number of opportunities to have their say, to consider the implications of their actions and to take account of their impact on others. The key worker system enables staff to develop a

detailed knowledge of young people and provides them with the opportunity to form trusting relationships. This gives young people the chance to confide in staff should they wish.

Staff demonstrate that they give great importance to involving young people. They talk openly and honestly with them as individuals or a group. They provide them with information and enable them to discuss and consider the implications of their actions. Young people have regular group meetings that are well structured and productive. Meetings enable young people to raise issues that are significant to them, such as improving their supervised access to the internet in their residential unit. Staff assist young people to take topics such as this forward and for them to achieve satisfactory and reasonable resolution.

There is evident warmth in the relationships between staff and young people. Young people are open in recognising the support staff give them and how this has helped them become aware of their behaviour, strengths and needs. Staff offer young people positive, structured and consistent boundaries that help develop their trust, feelings of security and of being valued.

The successful planning of care begins at the admission process. Information about young people is obtained to enable initial plans to be developed to enable staff to work successfully with young people from the outset of their time at the school. Planned admissions enable young people to settle in quickly and feel safe from the beginning of their residential career.

As time goes on, staff review the initial placement plan that each young person has and develop more detailed plans that are based on strengths, needs and the setting of specific goals relevant to each young person. Plans give full consideration to each individual's circumstances, background and needs. They use identified strengths to achieve progress by setting realistic goals and recognising achievements. Staff ensure young people are fully involved in the development of their plans and support networks, all of which are reviewed regularly and with the involvement of all staff involved in supporting each young person.

The school recognises the importance of involving parents and carers and encourages young people to remain in touch with family in whatever ways are appropriate for them. Family and contact arrangements are set out in care plans so that all staff can provide the support that young people require.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Staff encourage and assist young people to take a pride in their appearance and to make appropriate choices about their clothing outside school time. Young people are able to bring their own personal toiletries and possessions to school and are helped to manage their own spending money.

Staff support young people in the development of their practical and self-care skills. A range of frameworks, both formal, such as the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network programme, and informal, such as individual support from staff, help prepare young people for leaving school and becoming more independent. Staff provide young people with the opportunity to try things out for themselves and are on hand to offer any backup and assistance that may be necessary. Staff also work with resources outside the school, such as local colleges, work experience and Connexions, to mobilise as wide a range of people as possible to assist.



Young people live in residential accommodation both on the main school site and further away in the community. The two houses in the community enable young people to live in excellent domestic accommodation that provides them with privacy, dignity and enhances their self esteem. The houses are a considerable commitment and investment on the part of the school. The on-site accommodation is affected by the age and design of the original building. The school has again invested heavily in this accommodation to make it as comfortable as possible. It is however affected by its proximity to the school as well as its original design and lay out. The residential units are used during lunch time by pupils from the day school, and young people living in the residential accommodation object to this, as equipment can get lost or damaged. A tannoy system used throughout the school is used in the residential accommodation. Bedrooms windows all have window restrictors fitted irrespective of the risks presented by individual young people. The dining table in one of the residential units is not big enough to seat everyone around it at the same time.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The school is well managed and organised. It provides young people with a safe and nurturing environment. Their educational and developmental needs are identified and are the focus of detailed plans that provide staff with an effective framework to support their development.

Staff are well organised and are deployed in sufficient numbers to offer good support and supervision for the young people who stay at school. Staff are appropriately trained to work with the complex and varied needs demonstrated by young people.

The atmosphere within the school is positive, relaxed yet structured. Staff are well supported, by individual supervision and team meetings, to assist young people. They are enthusiastic and clearly committed to ensuring that young people are able to make the most of the time they stay at school. Outcomes for young people are demonstrably good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school recognises the circumstances and needs of each individual young person and works hard to enable them to achieve their potential, with a particular emphasis on working to maximise each young person's specific strengths.

The school's written records are comprehensive and provide detailed information to assist the monitoring of practice. Some records, in the communication books for example, do not support the confidential storing of sensitive information about individual young people. Records on young people do not routinely contain the name of each person with parental responsibility for them.

The school operates rigorous quality assurance monitoring procedures and is committed to the continuous development of its practice. Visits to the residential accommodation on behalf of the governing body do not always take place every half term. The reports vary in style and content and do not always demonstrate that the visitors have checked the accommodation, the records and if young people in residence have had opportunity to meet the visitor and in private if they wish.

## 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 has obtained and retains on the file for each young person, prior written permission from a person or body with parental responsibility for that young person, for the administration of medication and to seek appropriate medical treatment when required (NMS 14)
- review practice to ensure that it is clear that where physical interventions or sanctions are used young people are encouraged to write or otherwise have their views recorded and sign their names against them in the records kept by the school (NMS 10)
- ensure that two written references providing information about the suitability of every applicant are obtained as part of the system for recruiting staff (NMS 27)
- ensure the residential accommodation is used for the exclusive use of young people for whom it is designated with other pupils having access only by reasonable invitation of those living there (NMS 24)
- ensure the accommodation provides young people with a pleasant and homely residential environment appropriate to the needs of the young people who live there (NMS 24)
- review the content of young people's records to ensure information on them is recorded confidentially and identifies who has parental responsibility for them (NMS 18)
- ensure that visits to monitor the welfare of young people in the residential accommodation are carried out in accordance with the guidelines set out in the national minimum standard. (NMS 33)