

# Wells Park School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Joanne Vyas
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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	27 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

Wells Park School caters predominantly for children who present emotional and behavioural difficulties. It has residential facilities which offer weekly boarding with all children returning home at weekends. Children come from all areas within Essex and the school may take some children from other authorities. The school operates a 24-hour behaviour management policy which is based on consistent, positive reinforcement procedures and this is the basis on which all teaching and social aspects of the school's curriculum takes place. The school caters for 40 children within the five to 11 age range and thus takes children to the end of Year 6. In exceptional circumstances Year 7 children may be accommodated. At the time of this inspection, there were 24 children in residence.

Wells Park is organised into two distinct but integrated areas: education and care. The responsibility for management of education on a 24-hour day to day basis is delegated to the Head of Education. The responsibility for care is delegated on the same basis to the Head of Care. These two officers, together with the director, form the senior management team which reports directly to the governors.

The residential school is organised into four house areas. Children are placed amongst the most appropriate peer group residentially according to their social and emotional needs. Each child, on admission, is allocated a key worker who has general responsibility for the care of that child and works closely with the class teacher in their management.

### Summary

The inspector visited this school to complete an announced full inspection where all the key standards were inspected.

There is a strong management team who lead and support staff who are qualified, caring and competent. Staff are passionate and committed to the work that they do. Children, despite their difficulties, are polite, helpful and happy. The school is able to provide a high quality provision for children and meet their individual needs with the in-depth knowledge and understanding staff have of them. Individual needs and aspirations are recognised and plans are in place to address them. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding throughout the standards inspected. The school have a commitment towards children to support them to sustain their behaviour, involvement and learning without reliance on medication. Behaviour management is founded in positive relationships and reward rather than sanctions. There are excellent working relationships on behalf of the child across the school, to ensure that the child's needs are fully addressed. Staff are committed to work in partnership with the children and their families, social workers and external agencies to promote a child centred approach to care and education. The children are protected by robust recruitment procedures. However, the school must ensure that potentially harmful chemicals are kept out of reach of children. This is a minor shortfall due to the minimal risk to children on this occasion.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

The school has fully complied with the recommendation made at the last inspection. The governing body ensures its monitoring of the performance of the school includes all the elements specified in standard 33.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are focussed and committed to ensuring a high quality provision for health care for all children. All children are registered with doctors, dentists and opticians either locally to the school or to their home. A healthcare professional said, 'The school has very good arrangements with the hospital consultants, GPs and other healthcare professionals and communicate regularly to provide optimal healthcare services.' They also have a close working relationship with other healthcare professionals including speech and language therapists and mental health services as a healthcare professional confirmed, 'Excellent liaison with CAMHS services.' Each child has a good health plan that addresses the individual needs of children. The staff provide a consistent and skilled approach to the emotional wellbeing of the children in their care. The school have gained the Healthy Schools Award and their advisor stated, 'Over and above the excellent work they do with their pupils, they should consider gaining Enhanced Healthy School status as their work directly supports the National priorities.'

The safe handling of medication is well managed in this school. Medication is accurately recorded, received and disposed of appropriately. The medication cupboards are secure. One of the many strengths of this school is the rigorous review of medication that children are prescribed for their behaviour. The school have successfully reduced or taken children off medication under the close scrutiny of the prescribing consultants. A healthcare professional commented, 'The school work towards reducing drug treatment which is very positive and to manage these conditions by other means.' Staff talked about being able to see a child's true personality rather than it being hidden by a drug induced haze, which, they said, is lovely. All accidents are recorded and first aid is given as appropriate. There is a high level of staff who are qualified in first aid and so there is always a member of staff on duty who is trained to give first aid.

Mealtimes are sociable occasions, where a variety of healthy food is served in ample quantities. Children all agree the food is lovely. They are given the opportunity to discuss and change menus as well as grow their own food. Special dietary needs are catered for. All food is cooked from fresh and locally sourced. A new menu is produced weekly, encouraging children to try new foods. A professional visiting the school remarked, 'Children are also encouraged to try foods which they would not normally get at home by having small taster samples.' Children have visited their local greengrocer and taken photographs of the produce. These photos have been professionally enhanced and hung on the wall of the dining room along with photos of the children who took the photographs. This is a fantastic achievement for the children of which they are very proud.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The safety and rights of both staff and children are protected. The school take an active role in any safeguarding issues that involve the children. Staff are competent in their knowledge of how to keep children safe and the school's safeguarding procedures. Staff said that children

learn that their safety is paramount. Some children have experienced incidents of bullying but staff are pro-active and responsive to all bullying behaviour. The high staffing levels, vigilance and working practices adopted by the school go a long way to reducing opportunities for bullying to occur. For example, staff work with children to develop their understanding of the diversity of their community and the importance of tolerance of others. Observations of practice supported this work takes place. The school has a written procedure for action when children are absent without authority. There are very few incidents of absconding from the school but these are dealt with appropriately. The privacy of children is respected by staff. The living arrangements provide space where they can relax and easily find privacy away from others if they wish. Sensitive information is held securely. Children's issues are not discussed openly. Recruitment procedures are robust. Safety checks are completed and staff only commence employment when they have a satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure and two satisfactory references. All visitors sign into the school and must show identification.

Children are enabled by staff to make complaints. An opportunity exists during the school council meetings for children to make their views known as well as access to an Independent Advocate, a suggestion box and informal chats with staff. Children are listened to and taken seriously. There have been no complaints recorded but the school's complaints procedure would ensure complaints are taken seriously and resolved where possible within appropriate timescales. It is clear from observation and discussion that the school's management team is responsive to issues raised by the children and ensures measures put in place to resolve issues are effectively communicated.

There is a positive family atmosphere in the houses. Behaviour management is another strength of this school. There are clear and consistent rules which children are supported to understand. Children are rewarded regularly with tokens for good behaviour. Poor behaviour is not sanctioned but the reward (token) for that period of time is not given. Tokens are swapped for evening activities. Children embrace this system with enthusiasm. Staff are given training during their induction on physical intervention (safe holds) and this is updated regularly. Physical intervention is used as a last resort but is carried out appropriately and only to ensure the safety of children. It is rigorously monitored and staff diligently look for alternative solutions to physical intervention. Risk assessments are in place for children covering their activities and behaviour. Boundaries between staff and children are clear and relationships are excellent.

The school has comprehensive risk assessments for aspects of safety of the premises and grounds including fire. Fire drills are carried out on a regular basis and at different times of the day. Fire safety equipment is checked regularly and a detailed record kept. There are good health and safety procedures in place. However, mild cleaning chemicals were found in unlocked cupboards on the houses which are accessible to children. The Head of Care stated that the chemicals should have been locked away and ensured that they were immediately.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Children have excellent relationships with staff. There are lots of activities both in school and in the community. Children enjoy the many and varied activities, including various clubs that they attend such as Guitar Hero. The child's own individual interests are supported and they are involved in planning activities and outings.

There is a child-centred approach to care and education. Communication between staff is outstanding. All staff in the school work closely together to provide a seamless provision for children. Children's achievements are celebrated. Appropriate educational documentation is held on individual files.

Individual support is detailed in each child's file and observations and discussions with staff showed that staff ensure each child's individual needs and aspirations are addressed. This includes identifying any religious and cultural needs a child may have. Children are clearly valued and respected for who they are by all staff. Staff said that all children are included no matter what their behaviour.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are able to provide appropriate care for children and meet their individual needs with the knowledge and understanding they have of them. Children's files include a comprehensive individual social plan (ISP) and targets which are linked directly to the objectives set out in the statement of special educational need. Targets are reviewed each term by children, their teachers and care staff. Children make significant contributions to their ISP.

Staff are committed to working in partnership with the children and their families, social workers and external agencies to promote positive outcomes for children. Parents and carers are invited into the school and work is carried out in the child's home by staff sensitively to ensure consistent practice and provide support for families. A parent said, 'I enjoy visits. They are open and friendly and there never seems to be any hidden agenda. I always feel uplifted and positive about how the school works and promotes happy, healthy children.'

Admission to the school and leaving is sensitively and comprehensively planned. A parent said, 'The arrangements when our son was accepted and admitted were brilliant, everything was explained well and the whole procedure went smoothly.' The school celebrate children who are leaving the school, who often go back into mainstream school, recognising their achievements. A visiting professional said, 'When the young person transitions to another school the Chigwell staff attempt to monitor the placement and often visit the young person to ensure they feel safe and supported in their new surroundings.'

Weekly school council meetings provide one of many forums for children to present their views about the school. Children are clearly valued and listened to. A visiting professional said, 'The children participate with the school council and their views are actively sought when changes are envisaged. When young people have asked for changes (posters in rooms, change of paint colour of bedrooms) this has been listened to and where funding exists, acted on.' There have been many changes to the school as a result of listening to children. These include the development of the Eco Garden, raising money for charity and the purchase of items for activities such as a games console.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

Children live in a homely environment, with high quality furnishings. There is a large amount of communal space. The children have excellent facilities such as toys, games, books and a well equipped youth club. Their bedrooms are highly personalised and their photographs and their

work can be seen hanging from the walls. The décor is child friendly. The school is spotlessly clean, tidy and well maintained. Outdoor play areas offer fabulous play equipment within a safe environment. Children clearly value their school and their surroundings.

## Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

There is a strong management team who lead and support staff who are qualified, caring and competent. Staff are passionate and committed to the work that they do. There are good staffing levels in each of the houses with senior staff also available. Training is supported by the school. A professional visiting the school said, 'My impression of the school is that it is very well run, clean and has a very happy positive atmosphere. The staff seem very dedicated and are always very welcoming.' The school ensures the quality of care through continuous monitoring and evaluation of the service.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Evidence supports a strong commitment to improving equality and diversity in practice. The quality and detail of children's individual social plans also supports this commitment. All staff have an in-depth knowledge of the children they are working with ensuring their needs are consistently met. Staff work in partnership with parents and carers to ensure a high quality service where the ethos is centred around meeting the individual needs and aspirations of children.

This is a high quality provision providing outstanding outcomes for children who enjoy being at the school. A member of staff said that one of the best things about the school is that 'everyone belongs'.

## 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 there are no significant unnecessary hazards to health and safety apparent in the school. (NMS 26.2)