

Walton Hall

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Jackie Callaghan
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Date of last inspection	26 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

Walton Hall is a residential special school situated in a rural part of Staffordshire. It provides day and residential education to pupils aged 11 to 19 years who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities including aspects of autism, emotional and social behaviours and complex needs. The boarding provision is available for up to four nights per week.

The residential units are situated in two buildings placed within the school's grounds. Goldstone House is a purpose-built unit offering accommodation to 10 girls. The Old Hall is a Victorian listed building and provides three residential units: Gainsborough, which offers seven full-time residential placements for senior boys; Broughton, which provides eight places for post-16 female pupils, and Shugborough, which accommodates nine post-16 pupils.

The school is situated within its own extensive grounds, which offer a range of facilities including football, tennis and basketball. It has a motorcycle riding and maintenance area, an adventure play area, a small animal farm and a conservation area. These all contribute to the 24-hour curriculum approach. There are currently 29 pupils receiving a service from the residential provision. These pupils have contributed to this report.

Summary

This is a full announced inspection that concentrated on the key national minimum standards. The overall judgement in this report is based on the standards inspected within the relevant Every Child Matters outcome groups.

The overall quality rating for this setting is good. Pupils continue to receive good quality care, guidance and support. They are happy and they show trust with the adults around them. Three recommendations have been raised as a result of this inspection, in the staying safe and organisation outcome groups. However, the recommendations set are minor shortfalls that are not having a direct impact on the welfare of pupils.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The school has reviewed the behaviour management process to ensure that all measures taken to respond to pupils' behaviour are acceptable. Risk assessments are now in place on the windows in Old Hall and staff's training has been developed in order to deepen their knowledge on individual management of pupils. Staff rotas have been reviewed to ensure that enough time is scheduled for senior staff to undertake their administrative role.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils' individual health and intimate care needs are identified and assessed at an early stage. This is recorded in a clear easily accessible plan for each pupil detailing how his or her specific and general health issues are to be addressed. Health needs which may impact on future outcomes for the pupil are addressed succinctly and staff, in partnership with parents, actively

seeks out the services needed to address these. For example, speech and language therapists. This means the pupils receive dynamic care that actively promotes their well-being and health.

Pupils are provided with a nutritious, balanced and very appealing menu, taking into consideration their likes and dislikes. Food is cooked fresh each day and pupils take pride in helping to clear away after meals.

There are efficient arrangements to ensure that medication is safely administered. Pupils' welfare is further promoted because residential staff are copiously supported by a nurse that works at the school. This successfully enables the school to meet the ever-changing and complex health care needs of pupils. One parent confirmed this view as they commented that 'The nurse is fantastic and along with the care staff provides the children the help they need to manage their health.'

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff recognise that pupils are not all the same. They make sure that pupils have privacy, choice and control over the support they need and how it is delivered. The residential provision has effective leadership that consistently promotes an environment where safety and pupils' welfare is paramount. One parent informed the inspector 'I feel our daughter is very safe both in and out of school with staff. She has gained so much confidence and independence too.'

The complaints record is actively monitored to make sure that pupils' rights and entitlements are upheld and that the process is effective. The school has an anti-bullying policy and bullying is known by all to be unacceptable. Any issues are discussed openly ensuring pupils are protected. This was confirmed by one pupil who commented that 'Yes I have been bullied but staff spoke to them and sorted it out.'

There are appropriate systems in place to promote the safety and welfare of pupils in order to keep them safe. All staff receive refresher child protection training. Recently the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children ran a whole day's training on sexualised and harmful behaviour. However, not all staff as required attended. This training needs to be revisited quickly so that the missing staff have an equal and deep understanding of what action to take regarding allegations or suspicions of abuse.

The school also takes appropriate steps to ensure that pupils who are absent from the school without consent are protected in line with written policy and guidance. However, there continues to be no such incidents.

Pupils are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the school's behaviour management policy and strategies. Staff are very comfortable with their role of setting clearly understood boundaries while maintaining a high quality relationship between themselves and pupils. One parent commented that the residential provisions 'provides a stable, caring, supportive environment allowing pupils to develop within their own capabilities'. A pupil voiced that 'I am spoken to quietly about what is upsetting me and reminded of the rules.' Demonstrating staff's practice clearly has the prime objective to create a safe, supportive learning environment.

Pupils stay in a school that provides them with effective physical safety and security. The school has risk assessments that are updated regularly for all aspects of safety of the premises. These

assessments include fire, pupils' behaviour, and activities. However, there is some inappropriate use of language in one assessment.

Pupils learn how to protect themselves in an emergency because they regularly practise the emergency escape drill. This ensures that pupils can exit swiftly and calmly in the event of a fire. The school operates a good staff vetting procedure and staff demonstrate an appropriate awareness of the need to safeguard pupils.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils' educational progress at the school is actively supported by the residential provision. Pupils explore their potential and develop their personal interests because staff work in a very encouraging and supportive manner. Consequently, the care, learning opportunities and activities are excellent. Pupils' thinking is challenged as they take part in various community activities, for example, performing arts.

Pupils receive superb individual support when they need it. Considerable effort is put into combining social, education, care and health needs into a package which, not only meets individual identified needs, but actively promotes development. Pupils are engaged by learning that develops and challenges them and excites their imagination. They are successfully empowered to be morally aware enabling them to distinguish between the principles of right and wrong. This assists pupils in enhancing self-concept values and emotional confidence.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils are developing an evident awareness of others as they share and take turns, for example, at meal times. Pupils are imaginatively encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run. Staff demonstrate that they place great value on the views and opinions of the pupils and no pupil is assumed to be unable to communicate their views. As a result, the pupil's voice is a prominent feature that helps shape the care they receive.

Pupils experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes. Pupils are supported by detailed care plans that copiously reflect their needs and wishes. Plans include thorough risk assessments, which enable pupils to maintain their levels of independence in a safe manner. The head of care and staff team promote the pupils' positive awareness of gender and diversity both within the school and the wider community. Written plans demonstrate that pupils receive fruitful external support as the school has a pro-active approach to working with other professionals. Consequently, all pupils receive individualised vibrant care.

In accordance with their wishes pupils are actively enabled and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families when sleeping at school. The school understands the value and importance of communication and contact with parents.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Preparation for pupils' economic well-being is clearly paramount. The school is located, designed and of a size and layout that is in keeping with its Statement of Purpose. The whole school

continually attempts to provide a consistent, stable, safe and caring environment that enables pupils to realise their potential academically, physically and socially.

The standard of accommodation is good. It provides a comfortable setting for pupils in order to assist them with domestic-style living. They actively choose decorations for their bedrooms and help to maintain the homely atmosphere. This ensures that the pupils take pride in their surroundings as well as helping them to develop a sense of ownership of the school environment.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Pupils, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils. As a result, pupils are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently. Pupils are making good progress because staffing in the school is well organised and effectively managed.

Staff are well trained and benefit from regular staff meetings. However, staff's support processes are potentially weakened because they are not receiving regular half-termly supervision. All of the residential staff are qualified to National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in caring for children and young people. This means that pupils receive the care and services they need from very competent staff. Staff share their understanding of the many different behaviours that pupils exhibit. Although this demonstrated they have a good understanding in practice, some of the language used in various documentation is inappropriate.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Each staff member has a vital role in implementing an inclusive approach. Their individual efforts added together form a cohesive attitude. The staff group consider all aspects of their work and how stereotypes, attitudes and assumptions may prevent pupils from fully participating within the community.

There are good procedures for monitoring the operation of the provision. The management team provides very effective leadership for the staff group and as a result pupils are receiving consistent care.

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 all staff receive ongoing child protection training (breach of national minimum standard 5.8)

- develop the staff training in order to inform staff about the needs of children accommodated at the school. This specifically relates to the use of language used in documentation (breach of national minimum standard 29.6)
- ensure staff supervision takes place as identified by national minimum standards. (breach of national minimum standard 30.2)