

# Wishmore Cross School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Clare Davies
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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

Wishmore Cross is a Local Education Authority funded school for boys within the age range of 11 to 16 years. The school provides both boarding and day facilities for pupils with a range of complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Play therapy, art therapy and anger management are some of the therapeutic services available to support pupils with their behaviour and personal development.

The school has purpose built residential accommodation offering flexi-boarding for two, three or four nights each week. Within the building there are three separate residential units where boarders have single or double bedrooms. The boarders have access to the school grounds and facilities for evening activities. The school is situated in a village near to Woking in Surrey.

### Summary

This announced inspection focused on all the key national minimum standards for residential special schools. The school provides good outcomes for boarders, two recommendations have been made in relation to record keeping and safer recruitment.

The residential provision provides a safe environment with clear boundaries that are consistently applied by the staff. Boarders like staying at school where they can take part in varied activities, get plenty of physical exercise and enjoy healthy meals. Boarders are encouraged and supported in taking responsibility for their behaviour and understand there may be consequences. The residential staff have a positive attitude to their work and they value their teamwork, the training opportunities and the management support.

Ofsted received positive comments from parents such as, 'I can't praise the school enough' and described how the staff and senior leadership team are very fair and supportive to her son if, 'he has taken the wrong path.' Another parent said, 'The staff at Wishmore Cross undertake their responsibilities in an efficient and caring manner. Everything so far is excellent they should keep up the good work.'

The overall quality rating is good.

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

### Improvements since the last inspection

There were three recommendations made at the last inspection to improve practice in the outcome areas of staying safe and enjoying and achieving. All but one of them has been satisfactorily addressed therefore, the recommendation relating to the recording of physical interventions has been re-stated following this inspection.

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The health and medical needs of boarders are met well by staff trained in the administration of medication and basic first aid skills. Prescribed medication is suitably stored and recorded with written policies on the safe handling of medication. A recent review of the policy has occurred due to an error in administration. The school has introduced further measures for the

safeguarding of boarders' health and welfare, giving their full commitment to safer working practices.

Individual health care plans identify health and medical needs and how they will be met whilst resident at school. Parental consent for the administration of medication and treatment is obtained to ensure boarders are treated according to their parents' wishes. There are specialist resources that the school can offer to support young people with their emotional health such as, art therapy, play therapy, reflexology and access to the local child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS). For two days a week a CAMHS worker is available in school to pupils, parents and staff. This has led to home visits, working with families and developing a family support network. The development of this role has seen an increase in young people and their families engaging with professional support in school, within the family home and through community resources.

The school delivers personal, social and health education (PSHE) throughout the 24 hour curriculum in the classrooms and in the residential unit at appropriate levels of development. Residential staff are involved in promoting personal hygiene, healthy eating, physical exercise and life skills towards independence. Wishmore Cross School has achieved two nationally recognised awards, Sportsmark and Healthy School status. Healthy and nutritious meals are served using local suppliers where possible. Two main meals are provided each day and boarders can request a sandwich or jacket potato if they prefer. Boarders report that they like the food and can make suggestions to the menu. Apart from breakfast, all meals are taken in the school dining room. Menus are nutritionally analysed according to government requirements. Boarders are encouraged to choose healthy options and guided by a display board of different food groups. Boarders have the opportunity to do some cooking after school and develop some life skills. This activity will be enhanced with the development of a purpose built food technology class planned for the autumn term.

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

The provision is good.

Boarders' privacy is respected and all files and records are kept securely. There is a surveillance system on the external parts of the residential building, the front door and the gate of the school. This is to provide a safe and secure environment that does not compromise the privacy of boarders. Details of how to complain are included in a leaflet for boarders. It encourages them to speak with staff members and gives contact details for external agencies such as a youth advocacy service, Childline and Ofsted. There have been no formal complaints for over a year; suitable procedures are in place to respond appropriately. The strength of positive relationships between boarders and staff, and regular communication with parents has reduced any need to formally complain.

Any safeguarding matter follows robust procedures as detailed in the staff guidance. All staff receive mandatory training in child protection, signs and symptoms, and specific guidance on how to refer any allegations that are made. The initial training is covered in staff induction programmes with annual refresher training. The two designated people for safeguarding have received external training from the local authority. The school has a good working relationship with the area social care team and has appropriately liaised with them on safeguarding matters. Indeed, the school have been commended on their approach to safeguarding and their support of young people and families. The school has a very good document, a code of safe conduct,

that all staff sign up to. It is clear in its expectations of safe working practices to protect boarders and staff. Staff reported that it is a good document in supporting them to work with young people in a residential setting.

The school is committed to counter any bullying and regularly discusses such behaviour to encourage boys to report it. A school survey gathered pupils' views on such matters and a reporting system of any incident of bullying collates details in relation to the bully, the target of the bully, location, time and type of bullying. This information is used to reduce opportunities of bullying and has led to increased staff supervision of certain areas within the school. A simple system of being issued a yellow card for any incident of bullying is understood by the pupils, two yellow cards in a week equals a red card with consequences. Incidents of bullying behaviour may be dealt with through a restorative justice approach, encouraging victim empathy. Some boys reported that there is bullying sometimes but staff sort it out when they know about it.

There is great emphasis on praise and reward for positive behaviour. A points system operates in the school and separately in the residential unit. Boarders are awarded points for different aspects of behaviour such as; showing respect, being in the right place at the right time, showing a positive attitude, ability to follow instructions and they can receive bonus points at staff discretion. Points can be spent in the school shop or exchanged for privileges such as a later bedtime or playing on a games console. The shop offers sweets, stationary, clothing, and for those who save up their points they can exchange them for tickets for activities or theme parks. The boarders know what is expected of them and their behaviour and respond well to the points system.

The residential unit is well maintained with regular monitoring of health and safety matters. Environmental and fire risk assessments have been undertaken appropriately and reviewed. Records show that regular fire drills take place as well as routine servicing of equipment and appliances. There are safe policies for the use of transport and regular safety checks occur of gas and electrical appliances. Employment procedures follow safer recruitment guidance though one omission was noted. To address the shortfall safeguards were implemented to reduce the impact on boarders until all the suitability checks were received. All visitors are required to sign in and be escorted around the school.

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

The provision is good.

The residential experience provides the opportunity for boarders to develop personal and social skills. These skills help them with their independence, self-esteem and in forming positive relationships with their peers and adults. There are handovers at the beginning and end of the school day where teaching and care staff can share aspects of each boarder's day. Some care staff provide support in the school and some education staff work in the residential setting. Joint meetings and training events occur to bring care and education staff together. These arrangements and good communication between the teams contribute to the consistency and continuity of care, and the effective management of boarders.

Boarders are supported in the 24 hour curriculum through dedicated homework time and projects within the school being continued in the residential unit. For example, a school project on the environment has involved the boarders collecting recyclable materials and walking to local collection points. This has been further developed to consider ways of saving energy and reducing the impact on the environment. Older boys can be supported with practical skills in

the evening to complement their academic skills in the school day, working towards an award. This could involve an interest such as sports coaching and running an activity for the group.

The facilities and school grounds provide lots of opportunities for boarders to get engaged with sporting activities, art, music and cooking. A planned programme of activities is available every night of the week involving on and off site facilities. On site, boarders enjoy the use of the school gym for ball games, the playing fields for football and outdoor pursuits, games consoles, music, computers, board games, fitness room and DVD films. Boarders are supported in using community facilities and joining clubs for sport and other interests.

Residential staff, education staff and the therapy team work together to provide individual support to meet the boarders' needs. Link workers spend time with boarders discussing progress made towards their personal targets. There are a variety of adults that boarders can talk to about any difficulties they may be experiencing; in addition to the care and education staff there is an independent visitor from an advocacy service who visits once a month.

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

The provision is good.

There are formal opportunities where boarders are consulted such as the school council and surveys. Views are gathered informally through group discussion in the residential units, classrooms and on a more individual level with staff. Changes made as a result of listening to boarders have included purchasing some new electronic games, introducing some new activities and offering different rewards through the points system. Boarders are actively involved in any review meetings and encouraged to express their views.

The head of care undertakes home visits prior to young people boarding in the residential unit. This ensures that full information is gathered from parents, carers and the young people themselves in order that the staff can plan how to best meet their needs. A placement plan is produced for each boarder to identify how the school will meet individual needs in relation to health, behaviour, social skills, culture and leisure interests. Targets are set in consultation with boarders and details on how the staff will support them in achieving these personal targets. All staff contribute to supporting boarders in meeting their targets, it is the link workers who are responsible to record progress and ensure there is regular review. Older pupils in their final school year do not board to prepare them for living in their home communities and developing support networks. The residential unit and staff can continue to offer support with an extended school day where they can also help pupils prepare to leave school with independence skills and additional help in identifying further education placements or employment.

Boarders are able to freely maintain contact with their families through the school telephone, email or personal mobile telephones. Parents are able to contact their children at reasonable times and visit by arrangement. Care and education staff maintain good communication with parents through telephone contact. The school produces a newsletter each term and holds parent support groups. One parent reported, 'The boarding side of school is exceptional in their communication both to me and my son.' The headteacher has forged links with the local community in raising the profile of the school and getting the pupils involved in community projects. Pupils of Wishmore Cross School have made a positive contribution to the local music festival, clearing up the local stream and developing an outdoor classroom at a local primary school. The school's facilities are available as a local resource to promote community links.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

The residential unit is a separate building to the school within the grounds. It has three separate living units, sharing the same entrance and a medical room. Double and single rooms are suitably furnished and boarders can decorate their bedroom with posters and personal belongings. Each living unit has a kitchen area suitable for snacks and breakfast, the provision is not suitable for cooking and serving main meals, this occurs in the school dining room in a nearby building. The accommodation is well maintained and furnished to a good standard creating a homely environment.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. There is a culture of inclusion and every pupil is valued for their contribution to the school community. Assemblies and discussions involve a celebration of world faiths and cultural events. There are displays around the school promoting successful and inspirational black writers and poets, and posters by pupils with messages to stamp out racism in football. Boarders and day pupils are encouraged to support charitable events and have undertaken some fund raising for local people and world wide disasters such as earthquakes.

The school prospectus has up-to-date information for pupils and their parents with a dedicated section on the residential provision. There are very good staffing levels providing sound care and supervision for the boarders. Any staff absences are covered from within the residential team or the school staff team to ensure consistency of care. There are good arrangements in place for access to senior management for advice and support when needed. Staff report that they feel very well supported in their work through clear policies, teamwork, strong management and good training opportunities.

Many staff have achieved a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at Level 3 and new staff are being supported as they study for this award. The head of care and the deputy are studying for NVQ in Leadership and Management for Care Services at Level 4. The head of care is suitably trained as a nurse, in management and with counselling skills. The school is committed to training and professional development and in return staff feel skilled and equipped to do their job well. The senior leadership team have systems in place to monitor care practice and records. There is a designated governor for the boarding provision who visits and talks with boarders and staff. The local authority has a residential services manager who undertakes monitoring visits and writes comprehensive reports identifying any action that is required.

Through adverse weather conditions and a power failure the school was closed unexpectedly for two separate periods. The school response to crisis management at these times was strong in their commitment to pupils and their families. Home visits were arranged, providing support in addition to school work and access to educational websites.



## 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 all incidents of physical intervention are recorded (NMS 10)
- ensure robust procedures are applied to all areas of recruitment. (NMS 27)