

Penn Hall School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Carole Moore
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Setting address	Penn Hall School, Vicarage Road, Penn, WOLVERHAMPTON, WV4 5HP
Telephone number	01902 558 355
Email	admin@penhall.biblio.net
Registered person	Wolverhampton City Council
Head/ Principal	David Parry
Nominated person	David Parry
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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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

Penn Hall School is a Wolverhampton Local Authority Community Special School for pupils aged three to 18 whose special educational needs fall predominantly in the category of physical disability. Some pupils will have an associated learning difficulty related to their physical disability. The school can accommodate 80 pupils.

The residential hostel can accommodate up to six pupils for overnight stays. A flexible approach is maintained so that children can stay from one to four nights a week with a maximum stay of 16 planned nights per year. On occasions the hostel can take children on an emergency basis due to family circumstances. The Hostel is also available some weekends through the year as well as two weeks during the summer holidays. The unit consists of a number of bathrooms and dormitory areas together with a television room, games room, life skills room and dining area.

The aim of the residential hostel is to encourage independence and long-term emotional maturity.

There were six children resident during the inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This announced inspection focused on all the key national minimum standards for residential special schools. As with previous annual inspections, the school continues to provide outstanding outcomes for students.

This is a school with exceptional strengths that meets all and exceeds the vast majority of the national minimum standards. Students receive excellent support to meet their individual needs from a range of staff who collaboratively work together in the best interests of each student. All employees of the school have a common aim with the students at the core of their thinking. Training, supervision and support provide clear direction for staff who report how they enjoy their work.

This resource is unique in that it provides a very flexible approach to residential provision. Parents and students make their own choices when it comes to deciding if they want to stay over at the residential hostel. Decisions are also made on which students share the week together and those decisions are taken in consultation with the students. This service provision is viewed by the students as 'sleepovers'.

One recommendation has been raised but has a low impact on the overall outcomes for students.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no recommendations raised at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Student's individual health and intimate care needs are recognised and taken into account at an early stage and recorded in a detailed health care plan. There is excellent access to health care professionals, such as nurses, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists who work closely with school staff and parents to identify and meet students' unique needs. Staff are required to gain high-level competences before they can provide any health-related nursing tasks. Robust risk assessments are completed for manual handling and guidance is in place for staff to help ensure that this is done in a safe way. As a result, students reside in a healthy environment where their good health is comprehensively promoted.

There are robust policies and procedures in place for the safe storage and administration of medication and the nursing staff take full responsibility for ensuring safe practice. Student's health and welfare is safeguarded because staff are made aware of the appropriate procedures to follow. Student's well-being is further promoted as staff receive training in the safe handling and administration of medication, and all staff are trained in basic first aid. Medical consent is actively sought from parents and a signed form is retained on file ensuring student's receive preventative and emergency medical treatment without delay. Medication is transferred to the residential unit on a Monday afternoon by the nursing staff and any changes to the medication are explained to the staff on duty. The medication is then transferred back to the nurses at the end of the week and all medication further checked. Medication records are seen as key to the effective management of healthcare matters. Staff are aware of the importance and necessity of them always being up to date and fully comprehensive.

Students' continue to be provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs by a team of experienced catering staff who are integral to the life of the school. Students' are encouraged to eat a healthy diet and fresh fruit and yoghurts are always available. Menus are on display and students' can choose from a selection of meals. Vegetarian and culturally appropriate foods are available. Feeding plans are exceptionally well documented ensuring what level of support is required at mealtimes for each young person, listing special diets, what crockery and cutlery are used, what help children need to feed themselves and what strategies to employ if the young person refuses to eat or drink. Mealtimes are seen as social events that help students' with differing communication difficulties improve their social interactions.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Students are systematically protected from harm by robust arrangements for safe personal care. Staff thoroughly respect children's need for privacy and confidentiality. There is an open approach to complaints from all sources, and staff successfully support students to use accessible processes to make their views known. As part of this process staff skilfully enable students to understand the views of others.

The safety and welfare of students has a very high priority in the school and they say they feel safe during their stay. Staff understand and are clear about what they should do if there is a safeguarding issue. Staff are also very familiar with the referral process to the Local Safeguarding Children Board. They are trained in safeguarding issues and are therefore very aware of vulnerability issues for students in residential care. Each student has their needs and risks identified in documents providing detailed, clear information to staff about how risks can be minimised as far as possible. These risk assessment documents work very well in practice and help to keep students safe.

The quality of relationships between staff and children is outstanding and reinforces the very caring atmosphere that can be witnessed throughout the school. This view is reinforced by a parent who states, 'We know he can enjoy activities in safe hands.'

Staff work hard to protect students from the impact of bullying, anti-social or intimidating behaviour. Staff are sensitive and attuned to individual needs. Detailed planning and close supervision ensures a supportive response.

Students' safety is promoted by an established health and safety policy, which ensures risks are identified and appropriate action is taken to manage and reduce them. Students' and staff are involved in fire drills and there are regular checks on all fire and electrical equipment to ensure it is in good working order. All staff are appropriately trained in health and safety matters including first aid and fire awareness.

Students' continue to be protected by the school's robust recruitment systems that ensures all staff employed complete the necessary recruitment checks and are deemed suitable to work before commencement of employment. Proactive monitoring of visitors to the school takes place, so as to prevent children being exposed to unsuitable adults. This excellent practice truly safeguards their welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The residential experience provides the opportunity for students to develop personal and social skills. This helps them with their independence, their self-esteem and to form positive relationships with their peers and adults. A parent reported 'It gives

them the opportunity to mix with their peers and to experience activities which we are unable to provide at home'. There are handover points throughout the school day where teaching and care staff can share aspects of the students' day. Some care staff provide support in the classrooms and some education staff work in the residential setting. These arrangements and good communication between the education and residential teams contribute to the consistency and continuity of care, and the effective management of students.

Individual support is available from a variety of sources within the school to meet the students' special needs. Residential staff, teaching staff and therapists work together to provide the most appropriate support tailored to the individual. Staff spend time with students helping them in making progress towards their personal targets. The hostel has some specialist resources to support key working such as board games, art and craft equipment, computers and interactive toys. The students report that they can talk to the residential staff about any difficulties they may be experiencing. In addition to the residential staff there is a nominated governor and an advocate who visit regularly and volunteers who provide an added dimension to activities.

Students reside and learn in a fully inclusive environment which truly inspires them to respect and value their own needs and the differing needs of others. Students have said 'I really like staying over as I have the chance to go out and spend time with my friends.'

Many parents report high levels of satisfaction with comments such as; 'Excellent communication between home and hostel.' 'The staff really understand our son and are able to offer him all the help he needs at appropriate times.' 'The hostel provides a very safe and happy environment.'

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Parents recognise that children have access when having a sleepover to a range of opportunities that they would not always be able to introduce themselves. One parent wrote 'having time in the hostel has helped my son be as independent as his disability allows'. This is further nurtured by the arrangement of the boarding accommodation where young people actively choose to share a bedroom with their friends.

Students are proactively encouraged, enabled and supported to contribute to their care by using a variety of communication aids. Consequently, student's views are clearly valued and they are given choice wherever possible. There are explicit written plans which summarise how student's needs are to be met. Residential staff's care practice in this area is excellent. Students take home at the end of their stay 'What I get up to in residence,' which is excellent feedback to parents.

There is a very evident warmth in the relationship between the staff and the students and the staff team have been working at Penn Hall for many years, and

have built up a strong bond with the students. Staff are very comfortable with their role of setting clearly understood boundaries while maintaining a high quality relationship between themselves and the students.

Each student has clear records when they come into the residential hostel that have been drawn up between the school and the hostel. This clearly details how student's needs are to be met during their overnight stays

Student's are helped to move in and on from the school with well-informed, sensitive staff support. The school has established excellent preparation for students staying in residence for the first time. Care staff have a profile of each young person about the child's routines, as well as their likes and dislikes. This means that when students sleep at the school they experience consistent care. Young people spoken to were keen to find out when their next stay in residence was to take place.

Students are only in the hostel for a maximum four night stay so contact is not a major issue. However, parents or carers are encouraged to visit should they choose to do so and children are able to telephone home as and when they wish.

Children's enjoyment of sleepovers is high because it is relevant to their needs and interests. The evening curriculum is exciting as children take part in really valuable activities both on and off site. They learn how to relate socially to others around them and how to cooperate with their peers and staff. Above all they told me they thoroughly enjoy their 'sleepovers'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The school has developed effective systems for improving life skills which will support students after leaving the school. This transition development is constantly being used throughout students' school life. Both care and education staff are fully involved with developing each student's independence and the enabling technology in the life skill room is used effectively to enable students to be more independent.

The residential unit is a separate building to the school within the grounds. The hostel provides a homely environment with comfortable furnishings. The lounge and dining room provide sufficient space for the group and additional play rooms are available for specific activities and individual time with an adult. Dormitories are suitably furnished with ample space for those students using wheelchairs. The accommodation is well maintained and furnished to a reasonably good standard. A programme of redecoration is planned yearly.

The hostel has extensive grounds surrounding the school where a good range of activities can take place when weather permits.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Students flourish as they are cared for by an exceptionally organised, committed management and staff group who are dedicated to providing care of the highest quality. Parents and students have a clear statement on how the hostel operates. Consequently, all parties are well informed about the running of the school.

The hostel is organised and managed in a manner that delivers and maintains an outstanding level of care. The head of care provides good leadership and has the expertise, skills and knowledge to effectively manage a residential provision. She is currently in the latter stages of completion of the leadership and management award. The head of care is actively involved in the day-to-day running of the residential provision. Her hands-on approach is a positive aspect of the school. The management of the school and the hostel clearly work in harmony and, along with the staff team share a positive practical vision for the students who attend the school.

The cohesion of the senior leadership team is a strength of the school with their determination to continually raise standards in the delivery of care and education to the students. There are sufficient numbers of staff to meet the complex needs of the students and to support them in their activities, any absences are covered from within the school staff team to ensure consistency of care.

Students are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare. Staff have great confidence in the people who manage them and managers value the staff. Professional supervision takes place and regular staff meetings involving all staff, ensure consistency of approach and a professional working partnership. The head of care is currently unable to attend all pastoral meetings due to the rota system that is in place.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The environment promotes the individual and diverse identities of children and this uniqueness is celebrated in a way that promotes awareness and understanding.

Students and staff enjoy the stability of an efficiently run school. Systems for monitoring the operation of the residential school are excellent, and the school has an atmosphere of creative and focused direction with student's welfare clearly at the forefront. This was confirmed by a child who voiced that 'the school and 'resi' is great.' The board of governors play an active role in the monitoring of the hostel and the quality assurance function captures student's overall experiences and highlights any areas for improvement. These visits provide excellent additional safeguarding mechanisms for students by looking at staff and management practices.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Compliance with national minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- ensure rotas have time scheduled to allow the head of care to participate in pastoral meetings without compromising the overall care of children.(NMS 31.5)