

Arbour Vale School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Brian Mcquoid
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Head/ Principal	
Nominated person	Debbie Richards
Date of last inspection	12/11/2009

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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

Arbour Vale School provides education for pupils who have moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, or have an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). The school's residential provision, Arbour Vale House, is purpose built and located within the school site. There is accommodation for 12 pupils. The stated aim of the residential provision is to work on specific objectives with pupils who have a diagnosis of ASD, via education programmes and extended learning opportunities, through delivery of a 24-hour curriculum. There is close collaboration between parents/carers, residential staff and school staff to ensure consistency between environments. Overnight placements are from Monday evening to Friday morning inclusive.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Arbour Vale House works extremely successfully to achieve positive outcomes for its residential pupils and is assessed as outstanding in all areas of its operation. Pupils are provided with highly individualised care in a safe and secure environment and parents provide examples of how the work carried out with their children has changed their lives.

The school's residential provision is extremely well managed and has a well qualified and experienced staff group who are skilled at working with the young people in their care. Staffing levels are exceptionally good and contribute greatly to the success achieved with individual pupils. The accommodation is of an extremely high standard and provides an environment ideally suited to meet the needs of residential pupils. There is excellent provision for promoting healthy lifestyles and for meeting specific health needs. A culture exists whereby pupils are respected as individuals and where they are consulted as much as possible about matters affecting them. Excellent arrangements are in place for the management of risk and for the monitoring of all aspects of care provided.

The inspection was carried out at short notice and the school was inspected against all of the key standards for residential special schools. There is one recommendation arising from the inspection which relates to the frequency of supervision for newly appointed staff.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no recommendations arising from the school's previous inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The school has maintained 'Healthy Schools Status' since 2007. Residential pupils remain registered with their own doctors and dentists, and parents retain primary responsibility for meeting their child's routine health needs. The school, however, makes excellent provision for addressing specific health needs and for encouraging and supporting pupils to develop healthy lifestyles. All pupils have individual health care plans, they have regular developmental checks and are subject to annual health assessments. Access to specialist services such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech and language therapy is extremely good and care staff work closely with external health professionals already involved with pupils. Those pupils with specific health needs are closely monitored at all times and have individual protocols in place for the administration of emergency medication. Staff have received training relevant to these procedures and there is a qualified first aid person on duty at all times. Healthy lifestyles are promoted across the school, both during the school day and in the residential provision. Lots of opportunities are provided for physical activities and for doing things that pupils enjoy. This includes a range of activities in the community such as shopping, bowling, canoeing, and go-karting.

Provision for the management and administration of medication is excellent. Robust policies and procedures provide suitable safeguards for the welfare of pupils and are implemented by staff who have received specific training in this area. All medication is stored securely, meticulous records are maintained and these are monitored regularly by senior staff and the school nurse.

Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily and are provided with a varied and balanced diet by the school's central kitchen. Facilities within the residential provision are excellent and include a very well-equipped kitchen and spacious dining area. Care staff utilise these facilities to prepare alternatives for pupils and to provide for special dietary needs. Pupils have access to the kitchen subject to an assessment of risk and are encouraged and supported to become involved as much as possible in the preparation of meals, and in preparing drinks and snacks for themselves. All staff are suitably trained in food handling and hygiene.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Safeguarding has a very high priority within the school and there are established systems which are rigorously applied to ensure the safety of pupils and staff. These include up-to-date policies and procedures which support and promote good practice across the school, and the provision of regular child protection training for all staff. Arbour Vale House provides a safe and secure environment for pupils within which they are well protected from harm at all times. Pupils are valued as individuals and have their privacy duly respected by staff who are trained in the provision of personal care. Clear complaints information is provided for pupils and their parents,

and staff are acutely aware of their responsibility to advocate for pupils whenever necessary. There have been no formal complaints received in relation to the residential provision since it opened in 2008.

Staff successfully develop positive relationships with pupils and this contributes extremely effectively to the progress that pupils make. Clear boundaries are provided within which a skilled staff group use a variety of strategies to enable pupils to develop positive behaviours and reduce those which are challenging. All staff have completed behaviour management training, and the use of sanctions and physical intervention is at an extremely low level. Detailed individual risk assessments and behaviour support plans fully support the management of pupil behaviour. There are no concerns about bullying-type behaviours, and parents comment extremely positively about the progress their children have made while being a residential pupil.

There is excellent provision within the residential setting and across the school for the management of risk. Security arrangements provide restricted access to the school site and there is a swipe card system in operation for accessing Arbour Vale House. Written risk assessments are in place for the premises and for all activities undertaken by pupils, both on and off site. These are reviewed on an annual basis. The governing body oversees provision for health and safety and staff receive related training also. There is a facilities manager on site and any matters relating to safety are addressed promptly. Provision for fire safety is excellent with a trained fire warden on duty at all times. An up-to-date fire risk assessment is in place and all checks and tests of fire safety equipment are being carried out and recorded as required. Evacuation procedures are practiced regularly and all pupils have individual risk assessments relating to this process.

Recruitment procedures ensure the suitability of staff and provide the necessary safeguards for the welfare of pupils. The process is being rigorously applied and closely monitored.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The school and its residential provision work extremely successfully together to the benefit of pupils who stay in Arbour Vale House. The care staff group provide exceedingly good support which greatly enhances the development of pupils in areas such as communication, personal care, independence, behaviour, and life skills. The school's senior management team includes the head of care, and the school's headteacher is closely involved in the monitoring of the care of individual pupils and the work being carried out with them. Care and education staff communicate on a daily basis during handovers at the beginning and end of each school day. Close collaboration between care, education and parents identifies individual care targets to be implemented in the residential setting. These targets are subject to ongoing review, with the progress of individual pupils being discussed at their annual reviews. These are attended by representatives from care who produce detailed reports on pupils and their progress during the year. Care staff provide support for pupils who

bring work back from school and there are excellent facilities and resources available to support the education of pupils outside of the school day. This includes access to the school library during the evenings.

There is outstanding individual support for pupils that is provided according to their assessed needs. Staffing levels within the house are excellent and provide a consistency of staffing which pupils benefit from greatly. Comprehensive plans address pupils' individual needs in all areas of their daily lives, and specialist services are provided whenever necessary. Staff are very sensitive to the needs of all the residential pupils and work very closely with parents and involved external agencies to ensure they are met.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Consulting with pupils and providing them with choice in their daily lives are totally integrated into the practice of staff at Arbour Vale House. The ability to be independent and make choices are areas maximised to the benefit of pupils. Staff have an acute awareness of individual pupils and are able to communicate very effectively with them. This ability enables them to successfully encourage and support pupils in working towards their individual care plan targets. Pupils are enabled to contribute to their annual reviews according to their ability, with staff and parents also advocating for them. Individual care plans are comprehensive and are very closely monitored. All pupils are routinely discussed at weekly staff meetings, detailed progress reports are produced every half term and thorough care assessments every term. Feedback from parents and the sampling of case records show pupils make significant progress while being resident at Arbour Vale House.

Transition into the residential provision is planned and handled very sensitively according to the needs of pupils and their parents. The process is gradual and provides lots of opportunities for pupils to become familiar with the accommodation and with staff prior to their first overnight stay. Transitions for pupils moving on from the school are always discussed at an early stage during annual reviews and the school works closely with external agencies to facilitate the process.

The residential staff work extremely closely with the parents of the pupils they care for. There is excellent communication with parents and a telephone is available for pupils to use in private should they wish to. Those parents spoken to reported being able to visit freely and said that they are appropriately informed and consulted about welfare matters concerning their children. Weekly emails and a photographic record are sent to all parents concerning their child's week. In addition a newsletter is now being produced every term which reflects in written and pictorial form the events of the term in Arbour Vale House.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Arbour Vale House provides outstanding accommodation that is ideally suited to meet the needs of its residential pupils. The provision is purpose built, located within the school campus, a very short distance from the main school building, and provides excellent access to local community facilities. There are excellent security arrangements covering the school site, and the residential accommodation provides a safe and secure environment for pupils. The school has extremely good links with the local community and provides access to its facilities outside of the school day. This in no way compromises the care of residential pupils.

The accommodation is of an exceptionally high standard and is extremely well maintained. The facility is able to be accessed by pupils with a physical disability; there is a lift, ensuring pupils are able to access all areas and specialist equipment available to meet specific needs. All pupils have their own rooms which are spacious and well furnished. Communal areas include two large lounge areas, an art and craft room, a multipurpose games room, a sensory room, and a computer room. There is also a well-equipped kitchen which students can access and a garden area which has a range of play equipment. School facilities which can be accessed outside of the school day include the library, a hydrotherapy pool, a splash pool, a gymnasium, a sensory theatre, a trampoline used for 'rebound therapy', and a dance studio.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Arbour Vale House is highly effectively and efficiently managed and contributes greatly to the progress made by individual pupils living there. Pupils and their parents are provided with excellent information about the provision which accurately reflects how it operates. A high standard of individualised care is provided by an extremely well qualified and experienced staff group who are skilled at working with the pupils in their care. Staffing levels are excellent and provide for very good supervision of pupils at all times. Staff in the residential provision communicate closely on a daily basis. There are regular staff meetings and systems in place for providing supervision and appraisal. Newly appointed staff, however, are currently not receiving supervision at the frequency required by the standards.

There is close collaboration between parents, care and teaching staff, which ensures a coordinated approach to working with residential pupils. Close monitoring takes place of all aspects of care provided for pupils and regular visits are carried out by a representative of the school's governing body. The head of care is part of the senior management team and works closely with the school's headteacher who reports every term to the governing body.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. School documentation demonstrates a clear commitment to providing equality of opportunity for pupils, to

celebrating diversity and to tackling discrimination of any kind. The school population is multicultural and multiracial, and the residential staff group reflects this. Pupils present a diverse range of needs which are well met within Arbour Vale House and they are provided with equality of opportunity. Staff have worked successfully to address cultural anxieties about pupils spending time away from their parents. Religious and cultural festivals are celebrated, special dietary needs are well met and pupils are not subject to any form of discrimination.

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 that all newly appointed staff receive supervision at the required intervals. (NMS 30.2)