

Wennington Hall School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Stephen Trainor
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Date of last inspection	01/07/2009

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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

The Lancashire Education Authority administers Wennington Hall School. The school provides an environment that can support up to 70 boys of secondary school age, from 11 years old up to 16 years old, on a residential or day basis. The young people using the services provided at the school have experienced some difficulties associated with their academic, social, emotional or behavioural development, which would make normal schooling inappropriate for them. The school provides a 38 week programme of education, with the young people in the main spending weekends at home or with their carers.

The school is internally designed and of a size and layout that is in keeping with its Statement of Purpose. Each boarding house provides accommodation for small groups within well-designed and pleasant premises. There is sufficient space and resources to meet needs. Boarding houses are sensibly separated according to age. There are three boarding houses located in the main school building, two more are situated close by in the school grounds. The school has excellent leisure and gym facilities. The grounds are fully utilised, enabling young people to pursue many leisure interests.

The combined prospectus and parents' handbook accurately describes the purpose and function of the school, outlining aims and objectives, philosophy of care and response to education. There is a vocational centre to further enhance school resources. The majority of pupils took some part in the inspection, either by completing a questionnaire or through discussions with the inspector during the inspection visit.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This key announced inspection had a short lead in time. It assessed every outcome heading covering all the key residential special school national minimum standards.

This is an excellent service in every respect. The management team are highly motivated, qualified and competent. All staff are recruited properly. Practice is extremely well coordinated and fully embraces the government's Every Child Matters Framework, designed to improve services for children and young people. Team work is extremely effective. Innovative thinking enables ongoing improvements to further enhance the school's reputation.

There is regular consultation and transparent communication with pupils, parents and everyone supporting placements. Many positive comments have been received

on services provided and the management and organisation of the school.

All outcomes are recorded as being outstanding. Individual care and education plans are comprehensive and each plan is supported by different professionals. The pupils make excellent progress. An enriched curriculum of care and education ensures pupils achieve and develop their full potential. Pupils experience healthy and stable lifestyles. They are well focussed and take every opportunity to develop skills and prepare for their futures.

Excellent relationships have been established between staff, pupils and parents. Staff clearly go the extra mile in supporting pupils' needs. Pupils are relaxed in the safe and comfortable surroundings of the school and within their individual boarding houses.

This report highlights no recommendations to be considered to improve practice.

Improvements since the last inspection

No recommendations made at the last aligned inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The school prospectus highlights numerous awards, charter marks, outstanding contributions to pupils' lives and achievements. These include Lancashire and National Healthy Schools awards. The personal development and well-being of each pupil is given the highest priority. Pupils, with staff encouragement, adopt healthier lifestyles. There is an external network of support from professionals and agencies developing pupils' knowledge on lifestyle. This is particularly evident within programmes on smoking cessation, diet, healthy eating and exercise. Specialist agencies support mental health. School health services, education welfare officers, social workers and Connexions support care staff and the education curriculum in the delivery of personal, social and health education and citizenship.

Policy and guidance has been developed over a number of years with support from health professionals. Each pupil has a specific health plan. Up-to-date health information is held. Pupils confirm satisfaction with how health and well-being is handled. Key workers organise routine medical, optical and dental appointments. Suitable controls for administering, recording, storing and disposal of medicines are established. Looked After Children health reviews are undertaken. Pupils are supported by a named nurse who provides advice and guidance. The head of care has overall responsibility for managing all medicines at the school. Procedures operated are well thought out.

All staff receive access to training fully suited to supporting individuals' health. Some specialist training to supporting the management of diabetes had been accessed. Relationships have been established with the local doctor's surgery where the pupils

are registered. Pupils confirm that staff look after them when they are ill. Ongoing consultation with health professionals takes place to ensure practice remains safe.

Focus groups, including smoking cessation, are long established. Health fairs have been organised and immunisation programmes undertaken. Findings contained within a parent survey completed in September 2010 agreed that the school has a very good student support and welfare policy. There has been good success with vocational training courses linking healthy living and fitness. Catering, food preparation, diet and exercise all have a seamless supporting role within each pupil's health arrangements. Pupils' physical appearance and social presentation clearly show the benefits of leading a healthy lifestyle. Pupils clearly articulate the support they receive linked to diet and exercise.

Meals are varied, healthy and nutritionally balanced and include pupils' favourite food preferences. Pupils confirm that there is always plenty of choice. The catering manager ensures boys' birthdays are celebrated. Special themed meals support the work that looks at cultural diversity. Menus had recently been reviewed with support from a consultant nutritionist. Pupils have access to a wide range of health information to support lifestyle choices. This includes the school news channel used to relay pertinent guidance. Pupils' knowledge is further enhanced from the information provided on a daily basis. The Environmental Health Department visited the school recently. The full report was provided for Ofsted. The school responded quickly to the inspection findings.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

This school provides a very safe environment where pupils achieve and develop to their full potential. There is a clear behaviour policy which is underpinned by positive choice and reinforcement of acceptable behaviours. The boys' council is actively involved in reviewing school rules and sanctions. Pupils' behaviour throughout the time spent at the school was exemplary. Survey data shows that pupils and their parents agree that the school sets and achieves high standards for pupil behaviour. They also agree that the school has a very good pupil support and welfare policy that helps to create a safe, comfortable and secure environment. A parent commented, 'The school provides the utmost attention to providing the pupils with a happy, safe environment'.

The arrangements for complaints, safeguarding children, bullying and behaviour management are handled extremely well and ensure that pupils feel listened to and protected. No concerns were highlighted. The senior management team regularly monitors and evaluates practice. Developments and improvements are constantly introduced using innovative ideas. Practice at the school is transparent in reporting incidents that affect the young people. Records are produced on each incident. The senior management team have access to data rich information and use this to monitor practice. Analysis allows each pupil's programme to be continually evaluated in line with their specific needs.

There is a clear school policy and procedures for responding to allegations or suspicions of abuse. Staff have received training and are capable of responding to child protection matters. Senior management staff and school governors with responsibility for child protection/safeguarding have received specific training. Reporting systems and actions taken in the past in response to significant incidents have been appropriate.

Staff practice was observed to respect pupils' privacy, as is consistent with good parenting and the need to protect children. Information held about pupils is handled safely in line with policy. Staff keep information safe and secure and they are clear on the arrangements for sharing information for safeguarding purposes.

All the young people know who to go to for help if they have a problem or a concern. Written information available throughout the school enables the boys to form a complaint if they wish to. Complaints procedures have been publicised widely and are included in pupil induction. Pupils are confident that complaints would be taken seriously, with their views and opinions listened to.

This school makes every effort to reduce the impact of bullying on pupils. Pupils indicate they have no serious concerns about bullying and they feel safe at the school. The school operates an anti-bullying 'focus group'. Pupils understand that any form of bullying will not be tolerated. Pupils comments included, 'Our school quickly resolves any problems so it doesn't happen again'; 'The school staff deal with it in a professional manner'.

The school expects high behaviour standards and most pupils are well behaved most of the time. A pupil in response to the question, what is your school good at doing?, commented, 'Helping us out and listening and helping us get better at things'. Detailed risk assessments are produced to highlight concerns and vulnerability of the pupils. Detailed behaviour management plans are produced to support staff practice. Information held about the pupils is comprehensive, respected and confidentially handled. Computerised records held about the pupils are extensive, allowing different behaviours to be monitored. All staff receive training in suitable methods and techniques to be used if physical intervention is needed. Quality assurance measures mean that school governors check that incidents are being managed safely.

The response to health and safety is extremely well coordinated ensuring pupils learn in a safe environment. Personal safety and hazard identification are regular topics being discussed during school assemblies. Fire and Rescue Services visit the school ensuring fire precautions are safe. Advice, when provided, is followed. The school operates a health and safety committee which meets regularly. Servicing contracts for electrical, gas and fire safety are established. Boilers are serviced. Personal appliance testing is routinely undertaken ensuring all electrical equipment is safe. This includes the boys' personal electrical items.

A robust checking system is evident throughout the recruitment process. This means

that pupils are looked after safely by skilled and experienced staff. A good practice initiative means that pupils are involved in the staff recruitment process. Suitable evidence including Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks, references, qualifications, applications forms and records of the interview were presented on a random selection of staff. A suitable rationale was demonstrated where staff have been appointed with cautions or convictions. This practice is acceptable. All residential care staff have had their CRB checks updated recently. Personnel files are well maintained and stored securely. Suitable vetting of visitors to the school is also undertaken with identity checks being carried out before access is permitted. The pupils know that all visitors should be wearing official passes and contact staff if they have any concerns.

The school responded to new recruitment criteria introduced under the Equality Act 2010. Recruitment procedures clearly distinguish when health matters can be taken into account during recruitment and selection. The school's website, used to advertise vacancies, had been updated in line with equalities guidance.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils take pride in their performance within the seamless 24-hour programme of care and education provided at this school. There is a broad balanced and relevant curriculum for the pupils which includes an exceptional enrichment programme that makes pupils engage at the highest level. Practice is successful in creating ambition and developing real aspiration in pupils. A competent team of teaching assistants support programme delivery. Information technology is utilised allowing pupil progress to be monitored.

A grandmother commented, 'Facilities at the school are superb, since the young person started there his attitude has changed dramatically, especially his behaviour'. A Parent commented, 'I thought my son was never going to change but over the years he has grown up so well, I'm so glad I got him in the school and think the staff are very organised when it comes to teaching him'. A social worker commented, 'The school has turned a difficult unhappy young person into a confident and well behaved one, I am very impressed'.

Equality and diversity matters at this school which leads to each pupil being treated fairly. Each pupil makes good progress in meeting their individual targets. Each individual is fulfilling their potential in an environment appropriate to his special education needs. Pupils have learnt to live and work as a member of the school community, accepting its discipline and responsibilities and respecting the rights and needs of others.

The school has greatly improved academic results over recent years. A headteacher of local school commented, 'I think the school is outstanding. They change lives and give very challenging young people opportunities that impact on their futures'. The knowledge that staff hold enables an individual response to be taken when the pupils are most in need.

The school also has a well-established vocational centre that provides opportunities for pupils to gain additional qualifications and skills in preparation for their future lives. One hundred per cent of the pupils strongly agree or agree that there are many occasions when good work and achievements are celebrated. Pupils' self-esteem and confidence grow as they acquire skills relevant to adult life and the world of work and leisure. There are active partnerships with other schools and involvement in many aspects of charitable work. Cross-curriculum activities allow pupils to experience some real life project work. Pupils frequently organise and lead activities for less fortunate children allowing them to gain a greater understanding of wider community issues. This work is closely linked to celebrating difference. All support is coordinated within a multidisciplinary framework.

Staff practice engages the pupils in an extensive range of activities. One pupil commented, 'Lets put it this way there is always something to do and you never get bored'. Developing skills and individual potential through new recreational experiences are clearly linked to educational attainment and the vocational department. School resources are exceptional. Equipment is high specification and well maintained. The efforts of staff are valued by the pupils and their enthusiasm has deservedly achieved many official awards. There is a positive team spirit which promotes success. Pupils and their parents confirm satisfaction in how services are provided. Ninety Seven per cent of parents strongly agree or agree that their child is encouraged to participate in a wide range of activities. All high risk activities are carried out with qualified instructors. Parental consents are gained. Risks associated with challenging activities are clearly being minimised.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Staff's effective ongoing consultation maintains positive relationships throughout the school placement. Ninety seven per cent of parents strongly agree or agree that there are effective links between the school and the home and these links assist the pupils' learning. Parents are provided with regular school updates, letters and reports on their child's progress. Meetings are convened if there are any concerns. Statutory reviews take place. A parent commented, 'I am kept fully informed about all activities at school by the school'. Parents confirm good communication especially with key workers. Partnership agreements signed by pupils, parents and staff are effective. All parents agreed that they can contact the school about concerns. Parents also stated that they are welcomed when they visit and feel well informed about what is happening at the school.

A youth justice worker commented, 'The school is a very young person focussed organisation, they actively promote social, emotional and learning needs of every young person in their care'. Inter-agency work is coordinated extremely well.

Age appropriate written guidance is available to guide pupils through their time at the school. There is clear pupil involvement in everything that occurs at this school.

The school operates a boys' council that has elected members from each school year. There are school prefects and an elected head boy and deputy. Roles are discussed enthusiastically. The boys' council provides a genuine opportunity for pupils to voice their views. Weekly house meetings also take place and pupils' opinions are being listened to. Pupils provided the following answers to the question what is the school good at doing? 'They are good at making sure that your ideas are taken into account'; 'Looking after people and being fair with people'.

The school has clear and effective systems in place relating to pupils being admitted to and leaving the school. All introductions are planned. The vast majority of pupils complete their compulsory education successfully before leaving. All parties are clear on the school's philosophy of care and expectations on behaviour. Strategies to support year seven pupils in their first school term have been extremely successful. Efficient planning and support reduced the time taken to settle. The school environment is extremely relaxed.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The school is stable and clearly fit for purpose. Accommodation is safe and the standard of each boarding house is first class. The boarding provision comprises of five separate houses and each area has its own unique character. There is great attention to detail to provide exactly what pupils require. Maintenance of the whole school site is coordinated well ensuring its excellent appearance. Consultation with the pupils occurs, when appropriate to do so, on plans and developments at the school. Pupils talk with pride about their school. A recent survey showed that all pupils and parents felt that the appearance of the school is well cared for.

School development plans highlight the numerous improvements and developments that have taken place as well as those that are planned for the future. The school's budget is managed wisely. This is a dynamic, progressive thinking school that has been visited by the inspector annually for the past ten years. Everything is done to a very high standard. Pupils gain the best possible experiences, opportunities and care throughout their secondary school education.

The significant development of a vocational centre has elevated pupil experience to a different level. Pupils gain many practical skills while undertaking seven accredited courses. This centre undoubtedly complements national curriculum subjects in providing a more rounded education. Staff also provide an important link to the development of pupils through independence training. This training is evident throughout the time each pupil spends at the school. Formal programmes are operated in line with placement needs. One boarding house is designed around proving an extremely focussed approach to independence. Pupils commented, 'The school was good at getting you ready for later life'; 'Staff treat me like an adult'.

Transition plans are being produced. Personal advisors, Connexions advisors and educational staff support the arrangements in place. Daily life at the school provides

the pupils with many opportunities, appropriate to their age and need, for the development of knowledge and skills. Pupils work very hard and recognise the skills and qualities that future employers would be looking for.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school prospectus highlights numerous awards, school self-evaluation documents highlight many outstanding contributions to enhance pupil's lives and achievements. Inspection reports over the years provide comprehensive comment on the school's management, operation and practice in maintaining an outstanding overall judgement. The headmaster, senior management team and staff members have a wealth of experience which enables pupils' needs to be met extremely well. A social worker commented that she was, 'Totally happy with the service'. A parent commented, 'Fabulous school and example for others to follow'. The school 2010 parent and pupil surveys provide many favourable comments. The views and opinions of students and parents are valued. Many developments have been propagated through effective consultation.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Equality and fairness is reflected within all aspects of work at the school. Reflective practice and critical analysis on performance has led to many creative and innovative ways to further develop the already high standards. A culture of continuous improvement is established which places high expectations and challenging targets for all the young people. Pride in performance is embedded within the school culture and this allows many different learning opportunities for each pupil's personal growth and development. Pupils gain experience and confidence to succeed in life. Practice fully meets with the requirements of residential special schools national minimum standards. All five years of pupils attending this school are settled. Pupils acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is being addressed to a high standard.

The senior management team provide excellent support in maintaining a competent well qualified workforce. Staff have real empathy with pupils and there is good clarity in how they are being managed. The school holds the prestigious Investors in People Award for the high standards of support staff receive. Staff morale is excellent and their enthusiasm and skills make the whole school environment an extremely interesting place for pupils. Staff are always willing to learn new skills and techniques. A teacher commented, 'Excellent school offering superb opportunity to pupils, teamwork is a clear strength'.

There is a comprehensive development plan outlining how the school's operation will be maintained. The availability of high quality data from the school's monitoring systems informs where future improvements can be made. Project work is introduced frequently. This means that new initiatives keep the school at the 'cutting edge' of practice. A high level of community cohesion is achieved through an extensive range of partnership agreements. There are many strands of inclusion

work being undertaken. School governors and an independent visitor report findings in a transparent way. Reports are available. Finances are effectively managed. The school achieved the Financial Management Standards in Schools award. Policies and procedures are detailed and subject to regular review. Policies are clearly understood by all and impact on the daily work of the school.