

Wennington Hall School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Graham Robinson
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Date of last inspection	19/10/2010

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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

Lancashire Education Authority administers Wennington Hall School. The school provides an environment that can support around 70 boys of secondary school age, from 11 years up to 16 years old, on a residential or day basis. Pupils using the services provided at the school have experienced some difficulties associated with their academic, social, emotional or behavioural development, which makes normal schooling inappropriate for them at the present time. The school provides a 38 week programme of education with pupils, 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 a variety of 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.

At this full, announced inspection all the key standards were inspected. The inspection focussed only on the residential provision of the school.

Over recent years, the school has achieved and maintained its outstanding status following both educational and social care inspections. This status has been maintained, with the school continuing to review and take positive steps to improve its working practices, with the intention of improving outcomes for all its pupils.

Pupils like and enjoy being at the school. They recognise and understand the clear boundaries in place, but thrive by being given areas of responsibility which allow them contribute fully to school life. They are settled at the school and buy in fully to its ethos and working practices. Individual achievement, both social and educational,

is high.

The organisation and management of the school remains outstanding. The senior management team is well supported by a board of governors, who take an active role and interest in the schools development. There is an energy and commitment by all to not only maintain the outstanding standards achieved over recent years and push ahead further with continued development.

All outcomes reported on have remained as outstanding and although some minor points were discussed at feedback with a view to enhancing practice, no formal recommendations have been made.

Improvements since the last inspection

No recommendations were made at the previous inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The arrangements to promote the health needs of pupils are outstanding. Solid, well established links are in place with local medical, dental and optical providers, enabling pupils to be registered and receive a full range of medical care and services. The school is also well placed and connected to access more specialist medical services if required.

Each pupil has their own specific health plan, which is updated regularly. The school maintains details of pupil's health histories along with any specific medical needs or condition they may have. Written parental agreements for their child to receive a range of medical services are in place. Staff are trained in first aid and the administration of medication.

Appropriate arrangements are in place to store and administer both prescribed and non-prescribed medication. This is underpinned with comprehensive systems to record the administering of all categories of medication separately. These are up to date and properly kept. Pupils feel their health is promoted positively.

The personal development and well-being of each pupil is given the highest priority, with pupils encouraged and given every opportunity to adopt a healthy lifestyle. A strong smoking cessation programme is well established and the school has recently introduced arrangements that allow pupils to become more educated in matters of sexual health, with excellent systems developed to provide individual support. This is a prime example of the schools continued quest to improve its working practices, along with the levels of care and support it provides for its pupils.

The school has achieved numerous awards linked to creating and promoting healthy lifestyles, for example, gaining the Lancashire and National Healthy Schools awards. Pupils receive a lot of information both formally and informally, allowing them to

make considered choices around their own health and subsequent lifestyle.

Pupils speak well about the catering arrangements and have no concerns regarding quantity, quality or choices of food served. Meals continue to be varied, healthy and nutritionally balanced. Meals are relaxed, social occasions both in the main school dining areas and in the residential houses. Pupils confirm they have input into the planning of meals and there are choices available when meals are served.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Privacy is not a major area of concern for pupils. Most share double and triple occupancy rooms with some single occupancy bedrooms available. Staff are respectful of pupils privacy by knocking first and checking if it is appropriate to enter. There is space in the houses for pupils to meet with visitors in private. All sensitive information is stored securely.

Pupils understand how to implement the complaints procedures and have access to written information, which contains the contact details of several external agencies. However, pupils feel staff react positively to their concerns and gripes early, meaning that the need to complain formally is a rare occurrence. This is underpinned by excellent communication, backed up by the positive relationships that exist between pupils and staff.

The safety and rights of both pupils and staff are protected. The school has its own clear policy and procedures in place for dealing with allegations or suspicions of abuse, which includes immediate referral to the external agencies charged with safeguarding responsibilities. Staff are trained in safeguarding matters and understand how to react and what to do, should a situation arise. Senior managers and governors who have specific safeguarding responsibilities have all received specific training.

The school has an anti-bullying policy in place, which is implemented in practice. Full records are maintained of any incident that may occur. However, due to the vigilance of staff and the ethos created within the school, incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils confirm that bullying is not tolerated within the school and that staff are quick to react should an incident occur. Records show that incidents are taken seriously and dealt with quickly and fairly. Pupils confirm they feel safe in the school and raised no issues or concerns.

The school has a clear behaviour policy in place and records of unauthorised absence, sanctions and physical intervention provide evidence of the school's stability. A safe environment allowing pupils to develop and achieve has been created. Pupils understand and accept the boundaries in place and the ethos of the school is to reward good behaviour, rather than be punitive. Within the boundaries, there is the expectation of high standards and conduct, with realistic and achievable goals set for pupils. An outstanding system to monitor all aspects of behaviour

management is in place. This has assisted in the steady of the number of sanctions and incidents of physical interventions imposed, over the years.

Detailed individual risk assessments along with behaviour management plans identify any concerns and vulnerabilities of pupils, with clear strategies and plans in place to address them. Throughout the inspection, the school was calm and relaxed, despite an influx of visitors and the inspection taking place during the exam season. No issues or concerns about any aspect of behaviour management were raised by pupils, who speak well of staff and say they are usually fair.

General health and safety issues are fully coordinated throughout the school and addressed by a range of risk assessments identifying hazards both in and away from the campus. This includes risk assessments for all activities which are updated regularly. Pupils are familiar with fire procedures and take part in regular drills. Appropriate service contracts for fire, gas and electrical equipment are in place.

Robust systems that meet with current regulations and recognised good practice are in place for the clearance and recruitment of new staff. Evidence is held on site to show that suitable recruitment and clearance procedures are taking place, meaning that pupils are looked after safely, by skilled and experienced staff. In addition, longer serving staff Criminal Records Bureau disclosure updates every three years. This is an example of the good practices adopted by the school to ensure pupils are kept safe.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

A seamless, 24 hour programme blends learning with care extremely well. Young people are highly motivated and participate enthusiastically in all aspects of school life. The school is able to maintain and develop further its range of meaningful activities that cover both education and leisure. This creates well motivated pupils who speak positively about their own futures and demonstrate real aspirations and ambitions.

The management of the school continually look for opportunities and ways of expanding the educational, social and cultural boundaries further in an effort to provide pupils with greater experiences. A prime example of this occurred in March 2011, with schools first venture into performing arts. This culminated with the successful production of a musical show. Most pupils and staff were involved in the production and its build up, which successfully linked leisure, activity and education together. The positive feel and effects of this venture are still being felt in school with pupils speaking enthusiastically about the project and the benefits they derived from their participation.

Pupils speak positively about the range of activities they experience. For example, one says he 'is happy because there is lots more to do than just school'. There is an excellent blend of group and individual activities taking place. The school continues

to make full use of community based facilities and regularly makes its own facilities available to community based groups and schools. Generous staffing levels allow for individual needs and choices to be met. The School has outstanding facilities for pupils to relax and immerse themselves in, both inside and outdoors.

Whilst providing an outstanding range of activities that cover the whole sporting, mechanical, scientific and artistic spectrum, there is a sense of purpose and planning with each one provided. All activities are underpinned with an educational theme as well as linking to other areas. For example, one young person was enthusiastically participating in a set fitness regime in the gym, with a view to improving performance in his ability to drive a go-kart.

The school has active partnerships with other schools as well as being involved in a range of charitable work. This allows pupils opportunities to provide their own expertise to support other young people visiting the school who make use of its facilities. Pupils develop their own confidence and self-esteem levels by doing so, which enhances their own ability to take on responsibility.

The individual support provided for pupils is outstanding. This is recognised by the pupils themselves who speak positively about staff and the support they receive. Planning documentation; individual risk assessments; daily observation records and records of key worker sessions; provide evidence that supports this judgement. Staff understand the individual needs of pupils and have the experience and skills to meet those needs.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils are happy with the opportunities they have to consult with staff. They also feel they get good responses from them. For example, one pupil reported that 'staff are willing to do anything that they can to help you'. The school council has a consultative role and inputs views from pupils to senior staff. However, individual consultation is ongoing in key worker sessions and in the everyday communication between staff and pupils, which was observed as being outstanding. This is underpinned by the excellent relationships observed between pupils and staff throughout the inspection.

Feedback from parents shows high levels of communication taking place. One parent said 'my wife and I think the school is doing a fabulous job, and regular reports and achievements are very positive and is much appreciated'. Parents confirm they are welcomed to the school and are kept in touch by regular newsletters, emails and telephone.

Admission and leaving procedures are understood and implemented into working practices by an experienced staff team. Prior to admission, pupils receive written guidance, providing them with detailed information about all aspects of life in the school. Admission and leaving practice are underpinned by policy and procedures.

Excellent planning takes place prior to admission, allowing for individual needs and requirements to be identified early. As a result, plans and strategies designed to meet need, are in place, ready to be implemented upon admission.

Excellent planning documentation, supported by care, health, education and individual behaviour plans are in place. Each pupil also has a detailed individual risk assessment completed. When read collectively, they give an excellent insight into each pupil's individual needs and the plans and strategies put into place to address them. This includes their cultural, religious and identity needs. The documentation is thorough, comprehensive and updated regularly.

Pupils confirm they are encouraged to maintain contact with family whilst at the school, for example they are given mobile phones to help to achieve this. Contact for pupils is not an issue of concern for them.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Transition into independent living starts early with the schools ethos and working practices designed towards getting pupils to take responsibility for their own actions and learn from mistakes. Whilst there are clearly understood boundaries in place, pupils are encouraged to become more responsible and are rewarded for good behaviour. Skills and opportunities linked towards becoming more independent form part of the ethos and culture of the school. This assists with their personal growth and development. Facilities for more independence are provided and made available to pupils as they progress through the school.

The boarding provision includes five very distinct houses, each with its own characteristics. The ongoing, rolling programme of improvement links effectively to the maintenance programme, providing safe accommodation. The standard of fixtures, fittings and décor is high and is designed to meet the needs of the pupils who reside at the school. The school development plan highlights the numerous improvements and developments that have taken place, as well as the continued quest to improve facilities.

Pupils are rightly proud of the high standards of accommodation and facilities in place for them. They confirm they are consulted about planned future developments and demonstrate their belonging to the school by respecting the fabric and contents of the building.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The schools prospectus provides parents and others with a clear vision and accurate insight into the schools ethos and working practices. Nothing but positive comment has been received about the school from parents responding to surveys sent out to

them. The school has been rated outstanding by Ofsted for some years and shows no signs of letting this slip. There is a determination amongst the senior staff team and governors not only to maintain standards, but to continue to push them further.

A number of examples of continued improvement have been noted during this inspection, for example, the successful staging of the musical show in March 2011, which was a complete new venture for the school. Another improvement area is in the education and support given to pupils regarding their sexual health. Reviewing and improving working practices within the school is an area of great strength.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The culture and ethos of the school is to critically analyse its own performance with a view to further developing standards and allow for adjustments to be made to meet the needs of its pupil groups, as they change from year to year. Excellent planning documentation identifies individual need, with strategies in place to foster personal growth and development. Evidence of its success can be found by being in the school to witness and experience the energy of pupils, coupled with their own sense of purpose. This in turn gives them a wider appreciation and a greater perspective of both their own and others circumstances.

Pupils are looked after by a dedicated, experienced staff group who have the necessary experience, training and skills to address their needs positively. The energy and commitment of staff to support and improve the lives of those in their care, is outstanding. Staff are supportive of the management team and buy in to the ethos and working practices developed over the years by the school.

The residential staff team are supervised regularly and feel well supported. They confirm they have good access to the ongoing, core staff training programme, with their individual training needs and professional development being addressed appropriately. Staff work together with a team centred approach which aids continuity and the consistency of care provided. Pupils speak well of both senior and care staff: excellent relationships exist in the school.

The organisation and management of the school is outstanding. This is a school that does not stand still and is a reflection of the commitment, energy and vision of senior staff and the board of governors. The ethos and working practices are constantly reviewed and where necessary challenged and changed, with a view to improving outcomes for pupils. Excellent monitoring systems covering all aspects of the schools operation promote this. The school is settled and functions extremely well. Roles and responsibilities for staff and pupils are clearly defined, which aids the feeling of ownership and the pride taken in the school. This is reflected in the comments from one pupil who is due to leave soon. 'I feel that this is a great school and long may it continue when I leave'.