

# Wells Park School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC018021
<b>Inspection date</b>	22/06/2011
<b>Inspector</b>	Kristen Judd
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Social Care Inspection

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<b>Head/ Principal</b>	David Wood
<b>Nominated person</b>	David Wood
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	13/10/2009

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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**

Wells Park School caters predominantly for children who present emotional and behavioural difficulties. It has residential facilities which offer weekly boarding with all children returning home at weekends. Children come from all areas within Essex and the school may take some children from other authorities. The school operates a 24-hour behaviour management policy which is based on consistent, positive reinforcement procedures and this is the basis on which all teaching and social aspects of the school's curriculum takes place. The school caters for up to 40 children within the five to 11 age range and thus takes children to the end of Year 6. In exceptional circumstances Year 7 children may be accommodated. At the time of this inspection, there were 30 children in residence.

Wells Park is organised into two distinct but integrated areas: education and care. The responsibility for management of education on a 24-hour day to day basis is delegated to the head of education. The responsibility for care is delegated on the same basis to the head of care. These two officers, together with the director, form the senior management team which reports directly to the governors.

The residential school is organised into four house areas. Children are placed amongst the most appropriate peer group residentially according to their social and emotional needs. Each child, on admission, is allocated a key worker who has general responsibility for the care of that child and works closely with the class teacher in their management.

### **Summary**

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was an announced key inspection of the school. The purpose of the inspection was to assess the school against key national minimum standards and gauge improvements to the service since the previous inspection.

Outcomes for individual children are excellent and demonstrate that the school provides children with an excellent level of care and support from staff to help them make progress. The staff are a well-established group and very well supported by a strong management team. The school continually monitors the services it provides and there is a strong emphasis on continuous improvement and development. Comments from parents include; 'this school is excellent all round' and 'my son had thrived at the school and now has a positive approach to school life and learning.'

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

The school has fully complied with the recommendation made at the last inspection. All cleaning chemicals are stored in locked cupboards and are not accessible to children.

## **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Children receive excellent advice, guidance and support on a range of health and social issues and are given opportunities to discuss matters openly with staff. Individual medical files contain comprehensive information about their health care needs and the actions taken to address these needs are appropriately recorded. Records show that staff discuss issues relating to health and personal hygiene with pupils and where needed, issues are addressed within their individual plans. Health matters such as enuresis are dealt with sensitively. Staff maintain excellent links with health professionals. The school's curriculum promotes and addresses personal issues and health and social matters. Parents and carers are encouraged to work in partnership with the school in maintaining good standards of health and well-being. Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding and awareness of the health care needs of the children in their care.

Staff follow clear procedures for the management and administration of medication. Medication records are very clear and medicines are securely stored. All accidents are recorded and first aid is given as appropriate. All staff are qualified in first aid and so there is always a member of staff on duty who is trained to give first aid. The necessary parental consents for medical treatment, the administration of medicines and the use of first aid are held on medical files. Children generally return home when unwell and parents confirm that there is good communication from the school regarding medical matters.

Significant emphasis is placed on a whole school approach to healthy eating and physical activity. Children are provided with a healthy and well balanced diet, all of which is home made. They are helped to understand the importance of a healthy balanced diet. A range of foods are offered at each meal time to expand on their known and favourite foods. This has resulted in children developing the confidence to try out new food groups and ensure that they eat a balanced and varied diet. Meal times are extremely well organised with clear routines and expectations to promote the development of social skills. Drinking water is available and children have access to snacks, fresh fruit and drinks in the boarding house. Children are extremely complimentary about the meals provided. There is an excellent commitment to meeting the nutritional needs of children. The school emphasises an active lifestyle and children engage in a range of physical activities.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Behaviour management is a strength of this school. Any form of physical intervention is used as a last resort and incidents are few. All staff are trained in an accredited method of physical intervention which is updated regularly. Clear records are maintained and are monitored regularly to ensure compliance with the school's procedures. Strong emphasis is placed on the positive reinforcement of acceptable behaviour and a reward system is operated whereby children can earn tokens. They are rewarded throughout the day with tokens for good behaviour, which are swapped for evening activities. Children have a clear understanding of this system and they are fully aware of their targets. Children spoken to were extremely proud of the tokens they had achieved when reaching their targets. Children are observed enjoying excellent relationships with staff. They are supported and helped to engage and interact effectively with others, building their self esteem and confidence.

Staff are aware of the need to work together to provide a safe and caring place for children. There are excellent systems in place that ensure that staff are aware of the whereabouts of children and strategies to deal with any unauthorised absences, should they occur. There are clear procedures with regard to bullying. Children and staff do not identify bullying as a problem and they have a clear understanding of what to do if someone is making them unhappy. There is an extremely positive family atmosphere in the boarding houses.

Children's privacy is respected and information is confidentiality handled. Information is stored securely and staff demonstrate an excellent awareness of the need to keep information confidential. Children's' issues are not discussed openly. Staff are good at ensuring the privacy of pupils when bathing or attending to personal care. Facilities are available for children to make and receive telephone calls in private. The school has a clear complaints procedure. Children identify a range of adults, both in school and the boarding house, who they feel they can approach with any worries or concerns. Key workers also provide children with further opportunities to discuss their views about boarding and to raise anything that they are unhappy about.

Safeguarding is of key importance. Policies and procedures are in place to promote and safeguard the welfare of children. Staff evidence clear knowledge of their duties and responsibilities towards the children in their care and maintain excellent links with other professionals concerned with safeguarding children. Comments from staff demonstrate a very good understanding of child protection issues. An embedded and proactive approach to child protection is adopted by the school with detailed written information and training provided for all staff. There is a very thorough staff recruitment process. The school maintains detailed records of the selection process. The school shows a commitment to recruiting the right person for the job. All visitors sign into the school and must show identification. Good monitoring systems are in place to ensure that the environment remains safe with appropriate safety checks taking place at regular intervals. Fire safety checks and fire drills take place regularly

and clear, up-to-date records are maintained. Children indicate that they feel safe and well looked after at the school.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Children receive an excellent range of support. The school offers a wide range of opportunities for children to achieve both educationally and socially. All staff are sensitive to the needs of children and work hard to encourage integration across the school community. Children have opportunities to develop their communication, social and independent living skills. Staff help children to engage in education by providing a clear structure in the mornings and evenings. There is excellent communication between care staff and the teaching team. The handover system ensures that everyone is aware of the daily needs of the children in their care. For example, detailed information is shared in relation to behaviour that may impact on a child's well-being.

There are excellent arrangements in place that ensure effective communication between the staff and parents and carers. Survey responses show that parents appreciate the excellent level of communication regarding their child needs. Children confirm that they are able to talk to staff about any personal issues. Staff provide sensitive help to children experiencing homesickness and other problems that they may suffer from. Children receive excellent pastoral care and individual support in line with their needs.

Children have excellent opportunities to take part in a varied programme of activities, that offer them valuable learning opportunities and expands their life experiences. Staff support the children to experience different leisure activities in different settings so that they can learn the required socially acceptable behaviour. Activities have included swimming, football and trips to the cinema. Children have a choice on a day-to-day basis which is linked to the 'token' scheme used at the school. There are plenty of age-appropriate toys and games available for children to use. Children are extremely positive about the activities that they are able to participate in.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The school has excellent admission and leaving procedures. The potential impact of a new admission is carefully considered and monitored. Staff complete a comprehensive assessment of the prospective child's needs. This involves working in partnership with parents and involved professionals. Children benefit from a sensitive admission process which helps them to become familiar with the staff and the daily routines. Children and their families have the opportunity to visit the school. Children receive care which helps them to prepare for moving on. Throughout their time at the boarding house they are encouraged to become involved in activities that will help them develop skills that they will need when they move. Moves are very

structured in line with their individual needs. Extensive support is available to children and their families.

Children benefit from the school's holistic approach to care planning. Individual social plans cover a wide range of needs. These include personal care, identity, leisure and safety. They also highlight the strengths, personality and character of each child. The information about specific aspects of care of children ensures that staff have a consistent approach. The plans contain targets which are evaluated and updated on a regular basis. Information clearly demonstrates that planning for children is of a very good standard with a consistent approach towards the positive development of each child.

The school council meetings provide a formalised forum for children to present their views about the school. Children spoken to during the inspection were able to voice their views. They are able to influence change and gave examples of where this had happened. Children are supported to maintain contact with their families. The school works hard at developing a good working relationship with families. Staff regularly update parents on their child's progress, medical matters and any concerns. A 'chat book' is used to communicate events relating to each child and their families. Staff additionally keep in contact through emails and telephone calls. The aim is to promote a consistent approach to the welfare of each child. The school respects the views of families and regularly consults with them. This contributes to the quality assurance systems in place. Parents are highly positive in their comments. One parent commented, 'I am kept fully updated on all aspects of my sons boarding experience and feel that staff go above and beyond their call of duty to ensure that all the children are happy, safe and content.'

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

Children live in a homely environment, with high quality furnishings. A large amount of communal space is available which is well used by children. A homely lounge is provided in each of the houses, where children can relax in the evenings. Children are encouraged to personalise their bedroom with pictures and posters. Bathing facilities afford an adequate level of privacy. The school is spotlessly clean, tidy and well maintained.

There are additional communal areas, such as a youth club and a games room. The school facilities are also available for the children to use after school, including the sports hall, outdoor play areas and swimming pool. The boarding houses are well equipped with games, music and video centres, books and various other activities for children to use after school.



## Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The director and the head of care provide clear and effective leadership of the school's boarding provision. The management team meets regularly, ensuring that matters affecting children's welfare are discussed and monitored. Governors undertake regular visits to the boarding provision and complete monitoring and evaluation reports of the residential provision. Overall, the outstanding boarding provision, good communication and cohesion amongst staff is extremely beneficial to children at the school.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Staff are very much aware of each child's uniqueness, including their individual strengths and weaknesses. They have an in-depth knowledge of the children they are working with, ensuring their needs are consistently met. Children are well supervised by experienced staff that understand their needs and help them to progress and achieve. The school gives appropriate priority to staff training. This ensures that staff are skilled and competent to carry out their responsibilities and duties effectively in relation to the promotion of the welfare of children. Clear line management structures, a good team ethos and effective systems of communication contribute effectively the welfare of children.

A clear statement of how the school operates is available for parents and others needing this information. Additional information regarding the boarding principles and practice is available to parents, children and staff. Each child has a file containing a permanent record of their progress.

Comments received from parents and carers are extremely positive about the care and support they and their children receive. Comments include, 'I feel confident that the building blocks are firmly in place to build x into a kind caring and responsible young man we all want him to be.'