

Frewen College

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

DfE registration number	845/6002
Unique reference number for social care	SC049345
Unique reference number for education	114635
Inspection dates	22/09/2011
Inspector	Liz Driver

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{1,2}

Information about the school

Frewen College is an independent day and residential special school for boys and girls aged between seven and 17 years of age. Residential pupils are able to stay at the school for weekends if they choose. The school provides a specialist education for young people with dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, Asperger's syndrome, sensory integration and speech and language difficulties. Facilities include an outdoor swimming pool, fitness room, modern library and learning centre; football and basketball play areas and extensive grounds and parkland of a Grade 1 listed property. Boarding accommodation is split by gender with the boys in the main house and girls in a separate house which is due to be extended later this year.

The school is a registered charity run by a governing body. All the young people who attend the school have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN).

The school's residential provision was last inspected in November 2010. The school is registered for 130 pupils and there were 40 young people boarding at the time of this inspection and the majority contributed their views to this inspection.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	outstanding
Outcomes for residential pupils	outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	outstanding
Residential pupils' safety	outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of Frewen College is outstanding. The school provides a high quality boarding experience which has a positive impact on residential pupils' personal development.
- Relationships are both respectful and professional: residential pupils generally mix well and gain greatly from the activities on offer after school time.
- There are robust and effective procedures for safeguarding residential pupils which ensure that residential pupils' safety and well-being are central to the school.
- The school cares very well for residential pupils' health with sensitive and caring staff who have a high level of understanding of their complex, individual needs.
- The food provision is varied, healthy and of a very high quality. The use of home grown produce enhances the fresh meals on offer daily.
- The very good quality of the premises is continually being upgraded with further accommodation planned for later in 2011.
- The boarding house runs extremely smoothly on a daily basis and residential pupils receive sensitive and professional care and support from staff.
- The strong leadership of the school has a positive impact on both staff and children. Close support from the governors ensures all aspects of the school are regularly monitored.
- Since the last inspection the school continues to develop in response to increasing numbers of young people.

- The one recommendation made at the last inspection has been addressed with an excellent outcome for the residential pupils.
- There are numerous opportunities for residential pupils to contribute their views and know they are taken seriously.
- The school meets all but one of the national minimum standards; a minor amendment is needed to ensure its missing child policy relates to and is compatible with the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols and procedures applicable to the area where the school is located. The school has not needed to respond to any child missing from the site.
- The handling of complaints is robust and in accordance with the school's comprehensive policy.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. The experience of boarding enables young people to develop independence and social skills in line with their individual needs and capabilities. By the time they leave, residential pupils are able to make informed choices and are prepared for post 16-year life choices in relation to their individual capabilities and skills. Many go onto higher education, others into employment or training. Parents are extremely happy with the progress their children make in regards to both education and social skills learnt at the school. Many said that their children have achieved so much more at this school than they would have in mainstream educational settings. The boarding houses have a strong community spirit: boys and girls of all ages, cultures and backgrounds integrate well and form strong friendships. Relationships are good with a high level of respect shown for each other. Residential pupils enjoy the activities on offer after school and much laughter was seen during this inspection when engaging in these activities. Residential pupils behave well: they are polite and well mannered, respect one another and the staff who look after them, and generally accept as fair the sanctions which result from any misdemeanours.

Numerous avenues such as the school council, the food forum and the boarding forum enable young people to express their views. They feel they are listened to and understand the reasoning as to why some of their suggestions cannot be implemented. Where possible the school responds positively to suggestions and ideas. Any worries or concerns raised by children are taken very seriously with quick and robust action taken if indicated and appropriate referrals made to outside agencies. One area some of the older children did feel strongly about was to have permission to go into the local community to the shops. This was stopped as young people were buying processed food and sweets and then not eating the healthy lunch provided by the school. This in turn had a negative impact on behaviours and education due to the content of processed foods. The Principal's decision not to reintroduce this is in the children's best interests; however, the school could continue to promote other safe opportunities for independence. Residential pupils can access a tuck shop made available in the boarding house after school each day.

Residential pupils are very complimentary about the health care provided by the school and will happily visit the matron. The catering department adds significantly to their health status with very healthy menus and much fresh food on offer daily. Residential pupils enjoy the meals very much and feel they are very fortunate to have such good food. The huge amount of outdoor space enables activities such as football, where young people are encouraged to keep fit. The provision of an onsite gym also promotes fitness. The school's health care arrangements are highly effective in promoting and maintaining their physical and emotional health.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the residential provision is outstanding. Residential pupils receive excellent pastoral support from sensitive and caring boarding staff. Staff at all levels work in a coordinated way to provide excellent care and support for the residential pupils, enabling them to develop individually at their own pace. There are clear and effective systems for sharing information between the boarding house and school. Boarders are confident that there is a range of adults to whom they can turn for advice and who will take their concerns seriously. The school could consider further provision for helpline information for younger residential pupils that they could access independently. Effective support is offered to new residential pupils, commencing with an evaluation period where prospective residential pupils have buddies to support them. This was seen to be extremely effective with happy children experiencing Frewen school life for the first time. Residential pupils are able to take advantage of the broad range of extra-curricular activities and excellent sporting facilities available at school. In addition, they can attend local sports clubs such as netball, football and cricket clubs with parental permission, which many do.

Residential pupils' health is well protected and promoted by excellent healthcare arrangements. They are registered at a local medical centre and have access to a male or female doctor and other healthcare professionals. Health arrangements are very well organised with clear, regularly updated records. There are good arrangements for the safe storage and administration of all prescribed medication and homely remedies. Detailed records are kept of all accidents and first aid administered. Appropriate healthcare plans are in place for residential pupils with conditions such as a life threatening allergy, and these are implemented sensitively. Residential pupils confirm that they are cared for appropriately when they feel unwell and that there are very good facilities and effective procedures for checking on young people who are ill. The school's programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) is appropriate to the setting and young people it cares for and includes guidance from external agencies and invited speakers covering topics such as smoking, drugs and alcohol abuse and sexual health.

There are well-grounded systems in place that ensure boarders' achievements are celebrated. These cover academic, behavioural and social achievements. Young people are encouraged to participate in their annual reviews and express their views and opinions. Placement plans enable staff to focus on individual areas and report on impact and outcomes of strategies in place.

Residential pupils are provided with a high standard, nutritious, balanced and varied diet. The school caters appropriately for their religious and cultural needs, vegetarian preferences and any special diets. Food is in plentiful supply and of excellent quality. Residential pupils have ready access to drinks, fruit and other snacks. The use of the schools grounds for growing vegetables and fruit means that the children benefit from fresh and organically grown foods on a daily basis. For example, the home grown vegetable squash is made into soup which is then offered as a healthy mid-morning snack. Catering staff are appropriately trained and qualified. The catering department has received the highest award from the local environmental health

department. Mealtimes are conducted in a social, relaxed and congenial atmosphere. Residential pupils are very happy with the range, quality and quantity of food provided, with many going back for seconds and very little waste being observed.

Residential pupils benefit from living in a pleasant and well-maintained environment. Boys and girls are accommodated in separate houses and dormitories according to their age. Plans to extend the girls' boarding accommodation are to commence later this year. There is a good amount of comfortable communal space and good efforts have been made to ensure that the young people enjoy an environment that is homely. Young people are able to personalise areas of their bedrooms. A maintenance team is employed to make sure that any maintenance issues are dealt with quickly.

There are extensive grounds which include 60 acres of playing fields and listed gardens. Furthermore, there is an outdoor swimming pool, tennis, netball, basket ball and five-a-side, cricket pitch, athletics track, orienteering and cross country trails, an allotment and poly tunnel, a well-equipped fitness centre, a pottery, music practice rooms and a mountain bike trail due to open in the very near future.

Residential pupils can easily contact friends and family. They have their own mobile telephones for use after school time and can also access landline telephones in the boarding house. Internet access is available with safety blocks in place. The school is proactive in regards to cyber bullying with close monitoring, staff training and awareness.

Residential pupils' safety

The school makes excellent provision to safeguard residential pupils' welfare. Residential pupils feel safe and parents also confirmed they feel their children are protected from harm. The school operates a robust recruitment policy and allows only members of staff and volunteers for whom the necessary checks have been conducted to have contact with the residential pupils. The recruitment records are comprehensive. Protecting children has high priority and all staff have received up-to-date training at the appropriate level. The Principal is the designated child protection lead with two senior members of staff supporting her. The school has close and effective working relationships with the local safeguarding board.

The school is proactive in raising awareness of bullying issues through the PSHE programme. All forms of bullying are taken seriously and prompt action is taken to eliminate it when it occurs. There is a suitable anti-bullying policy, effectively implemented, which includes information on cyber-bullying, harassment and racial discrimination. Residential pupils report that bullying is not a concern and say they feel safe in the boarding house. Their parents confirm that they are confident that staff deal with it effectively.

Every effort is made to ensure that the school and boarding house provide a safe environment. Residential pupils are protected from the risk of fire by effective fire safety precautions. Fire drills are held regularly in boarding time and all fire equipment is regularly checked. There is an appropriate health and safety policy. Risk assessments have been undertaken to minimise the risk to residential pupils who participate in sports and off-site activities and to help the young people understand and manage risk. Premises are secure. Buildings and equipment are checked regularly and well maintained.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The management and organisation of boarding is extremely effective. There is strong leadership and robust monitoring of the school's practices. There is a clear vision to continually improve and develop further across the whole school. The single recommendation made at the last inspection has been thoroughly addressed with excellent outcomes for young people. There were no issues raised during this inspection about privacy and staff accessing bedrooms. Monitoring of the school by an independent visitor is regular with reports submitted to the Principal and governors for comment and action where indicated. All policies and procedures are scrutinised and reviewed yearly by governors, ensuring they remain up to date with changes in legislation and practices.

A wealth of information about the school and its boarding facilities is available for both children and parents. The rules of the boarding house are well understood and are operated consistently by boarding staff. There is careful attention to the promotion of equality. Diverse needs are catered for sensitively and this results in fair and equal treatment for all residential pupils and an atmosphere of tolerance and respect.

The house is well organised and daily routines run very smoothly. There is a sufficient number of staff on duty at all times to supervise residential pupils. A new girls' housemistress is due to commence employment at the end of September 2011. The boarding staff are effective in maintaining very good discipline and promoting excellent pastoral care. Staff receive regular appraisals to monitor their professional development and complete training relevant to their roles.

The school maintains very good links with parents and carers and provides comprehensive information for them. Parents feel boarding staff are accessible and responsive. Residential pupils and their parents know how to make a complaint and the procedures for resolving and recording complaints are sufficiently rigorous. The school keeps comprehensive records, which are monitored and kept securely.

National minimum standards

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.

- The school's procedures are compatible with the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care (RMFHC) protocols and procedures applicable to the area where the school is located. Where children placed out of authority go missing, the Head of Care follows the local RMFHC protocol and complies with and makes staff aware of any other processes required by the placing authority. (NMS 15.7)

What should the school do to improve further?

- Further promote and encourage young people to develop more life skills that are age appropriate and within their capabilities.
- Further promote helpline numbers to the boarders, especially the younger boarders, so they are able to use them independently if they wish.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



22/09/2011

Dear pupils.

Inspection of Frewen College

It was good to come and visit your school and to speak with so many of you about your boarding experiences at Frewen College. Thank you for letting me spend time with you. I really enjoyed meeting you all and listening to your views and have fed them back to the Principal. I particularly enjoyed joining in the activities after school, especially the 'minute to win it' game and making pancakes. It was great to hear and see how happy you are at the school and how much you like and enjoy time spent with your friends and the staff.

I know sometimes things can be difficult for you but the staff team really do care about you and give you a lot of support to try and make things clearer. I was also impressed with the respect you showed each other. It was clear that Mr and Mrs Sage and their staff team know you all very well and are supported by the Principal. The care you get is outstanding in every way. The matron does an excellent job in making sure you keep healthy and receive the right care if you are ill. It was clear to me that you feel comfortable in saying how you feel about the school and about each other's behaviour. I was particularly pleased to see that you have great relationships with the staff team. Staff really do listen to you and take your views very seriously.

The main thing you asked me to feedback to the school was about the permission you wanted reintroduced at lunchtime so the older residential pupils could go into the village. I spoke with the Principal and she said it was stopped partly because many of you were buying junk food from the local shop that had a bad effect on your behaviour and that you were not eating the healthy lunch the school provided. I can see her point and I believe the decision was made in your best interests. I enjoyed meeting you and wish you all the best for the future. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Liz Driver

Social Care Inspector.

Yours sincerely,

Liz Driver