

# West Kirby Residential School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Chris Scully

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<b>School address</b>	West Kirby Residential School, 107-119 Meols Drive, West Kirby, WIRRAL, Merseyside, CH48 5DH
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 632 3201
<b>Email</b>	yblackledge@wkrs.co.uk
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr G W Williams

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
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W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



## **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.<sup>1,2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

West Kirby Residential School is a non maintained special educational needs college for young people with complex and significant emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. Many young people also have additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

There are currently 85 pupils on roll aged from five years to 16 plus years, of these 71 are boys and 14 are girls. The school currently is providing residential places for up to 18 young people during weekdays in term time. This consists of 18 boys and six girls. There is a variety of boarding arrangements available depending on the needs of the child, ranging from one to four nights each week. The school provides residential accommodation on the main site and in two houses in the local area. The residential provision was last inspected on the 1st December 2010.

The location of the school and the houses enables young people to access facilities in the community easily. They are close to bus stops, a train station, leisure centres, swimming pools, youth clubs, shops, the beach, parks and other schools.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools).

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>outstanding</b>
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 West Kirby Residential School is outstanding. The care provision is exceptional and enables residential pupils to develop to their full potential. The school continues to be an example of the very best residential care. Highly effective systems means equality and diversity is an intrinsic part of the school resulting in residential pupils having a strong voice in the school community.
- Residential pupils receive exceptional care delivered by a highly skilled, passionate and committed group of staff who want the very best for them. The staff have an innate understanding of each young person's needs, which enables them to provide high quality care. Parents are also very proud of their children's achievements and comment upon the progress they have made since starting at the school. Parents say, 'we thank them gratefully for all the support they have provided to our children.'
- Residential pupils are making excellent progress in relation to their starting points. They are becoming more independent as they undertake small tasks, such as helping to set the table. Residential pupils are being well prepared for adulthood. They learn to take responsibility for their actions and are exceptionally well supported to make sense of their feelings and emotions. This is due to the high quality care and support provided by staff. Residential pupils say, 'I like staying at school, but I like being at home as well, and I have lots of friends'.
- The safety and well-being of residential pupils is of paramount importance to the staff and school. Staff are extremely vigilant and take swift action should they have any concerns about a residential pupil's health, safety or well-being.

Residential pupils feel safe when they are residing at school.

- The dedication of senior staff and principal to provide exemplary childcare is infectious and means residential pupils receive the very best care and attention from staff. This is aided by the highly effective communication systems between the school, parents, carers and placing authorities.
- The national minimum standards are met with no weaknesses identified, which have a direct impact upon the outcomes for residential pupils. There is one area for improvement. This relates to the recording of some risk assessments for outings.

## **Outcomes for residential pupils**

The outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Residential pupils enjoy extremely positive relationships with staff. They regularly engage in playful banter with staff and clearly enjoy spending time with them. For example, residential pupils revel in the opportunities to go bowling with staff and enjoy the competitive nature of the evening. They develop a sense of fair play and are very supportive of one another, cheering when someone does well and commiserating with others when they do not do so well. Residential pupils have a strong sense of belonging, for example, some refer to staff as being like their parents and the other residents as their siblings or cousins and others say, 'we are like a family.' Residential pupils have made strong friendships. They enjoy each others company and regularly visit one another at the different residential settings. Residential pupils are extremely sensitive to the needs of others. They are respectful of one another and offer support to others when needed, such as gentle reminders that it is their turn to bowl.

Residential pupils develop good independence skills, which enable them to prepare for adulthood through the excellent opportunities available. This includes life skills, such as cooking and shopping. Residential pupils enjoy the opportunities to help staff prepare meals, set the table and clear away afterwards. Strong links are in place with outside agencies to provide residential pupils with excellent support to develop their independence. Highly effective support systems are in place to ensure a smooth transition from the residential provision. For example, providing extended residential care for young people while they await their college placement. Parents and carers say that their children have benefited a great deal from residing at the school and are much more independent than when they started

Residential pupils are developing confidence as they engage in a wide range of interesting, challenging and rewarding activities. This is made possible by the extensive range of stimulating activities provided each evening, which include bike riding, going to the beach, music room, sports, youth clubs, dance and cooking. Young people are actively encouraged by staff and are exceptionally well supported to try new activities, such as line dancing. As a result young people are continually developing new skills and interests. Staff are keen to encourage young people to enhance their current skills, such as their expertise as a disc jockey and mixing their own sounds. Young people are really keen to show visitors how they have created new sounds from existing recordings.

Residential pupils are at the very heart of everything the school does. Their views are actively sought, valued and acted upon. Residential pupils are able to contribute to the running of the care provision; by putting forward suggestions for meals, activities and the colour schemes of their bedrooms. They feel valued as staff listen to them and act upon their requests, such as how they want to refurbish a damaged wardrobe.

Residential pupils are actively involved in keeping themselves fit and healthy. They have an excellent understanding of the importance of eating five pieces of fruit and vegetables each day and to limit their intake of sweets. Young people confidently

explained to visitors that they can have a chocolate biscuit, as they have had their five a day, but should eat it after their snack. Health care plans are exceptionally well written, are tailored to the specific needs of each young person and actively contribute to them remaining fit and healthy. This is further supported as staff's have an innate understanding of each young persons individual needs.



## **Quality of residential provision and care**

The quality of the residential provision is outstanding. The quality of care is exceptional. Residential pupils benefit highly from a seamless 24 hour curriculum. This effectively enables residential pupils to maximise the opportunities that arise from the extended services and activities, which are tailored to their individual needs. Similarly, special events such as, birthdays are celebrated with their friends who are invited to the house for a celebratory tea. This actively promotes young people's self-esteem, social skills and sense of belonging. Young people are making excellent progress in all aspects of their lives. This is because the warm, caring home environment effectively supports young people's academic development as well as their personal development.

Care plans are meticulous and allow the uniqueness of each residential pupil to shine. Care plans carefully take into account each residential pupil's needs and are effectively supported by the complex matching process for each house. Residential pupils are gradually introduced to overnight stays to enable them to make the transition from school and home. Comprehensive support systems provided during this time, which enable them to meet new people and to consider how they would like to organise their bedroom. Parents say that their children are making good progress and feel this is due to staff understanding their needs which mean they are able to fully engage in school. Young people's wishes are actively considered, for example, some young people requested that they be allowed to share the same bedroom. This was agreed after consultation with the young people's parents. This has proven to be a very positive experience for the young people concerned.

The health needs of residential pupils are managed with care and precision. Central storage of medication works exceptionally well in practice and means young people received the right medication at the right time. Residential pupils health needs are remarkably well supported as designated health care professional visit school on a regular basis and young people are provided with a 'drop in' service by the school nurse. This means residential pupils have regular opportunities to discuss any health care worries they may have with an appropriate person. This includes advice on their sexual health and well-being.

Residential pupils enjoy tasty home cooked meals that meet all their dietary requirements. The school enthusiastically follows good practice guidance from healthy schools and has considerably improved upon the diet of some residential pupils. Residential pupils are actively encouraged to help to prepare meals with staff. Meal times are homely, social occasions that enable young people to discuss the day's events and plan their evening activities. Residential pupils are keen to tell visitors about which staff prepare the best meals, such as the best packed lunch, bacon sandwiches and curries.

The accommodation effectively meets the residential pupils varying needs. Young people who are resident for the whole of the week have their own bedrooms, some of which are highly personalised with posters of their favourite football teams, actors and films. Young people who stay for a variety of nights often share a bedroom with

another young person. Highly effective systems are in place to ensure these rooms are personalised for each young person during their stay. This includes ensuring their own bedding is in place and their posters are displayed. The internal premises are very well maintained and residential pupils take pride in helping to maintain these. The school grounds are extensive and provide excellent opportunities for residential pupils to access additional resources, such as the sensory garden.

There are good systems in place for residential pupils to keep in touch with family and friends. Residential pupils are allowed to have their mobiles phones in the care setting and are also able to talk to family members via the house phones. Parents comment upon the effective home school partnerships, which mean they are fully informed about their child's time here and their progress.

## **Residential pupils' safety**

The safety of residential pupils is outstanding. Residential pupils are protected as staff have an excellent understanding of the school's safeguarding procedures. Staff are extremely confident in instigating these procedures, which ensures residential pupils received the effective care and support at the right time. Staff are proactive and will escalate concerns if they feel a response is not suitable. This means young people are exceptionally well protected from harm.

Recruitment procedures are well established and are robust. This means all staff are effectively vetted before they commence working with young people. The physical environment of all the care provision is safe and secure. This prevents any unauthorised persons gaining access. Visitors are monitored and effectively chaperoned at all times. Residential pupils are very aware of their own safety. They talk knowledgeably about the dangers of cyber-bullying and are keen to explain that they are not able to use social networking sites while in residence. While some feel this may not be fair, they accept it is for their own safety and demonstrates their increasing maturity.

Clear, comprehensive behaviour management strategies are in place to support individual residential pupil's needs. This enables residential pupils to consider the consequences of their actions and the impact upon themselves and others. This supports their ability to cope with their emotions and challenging situations. Staff use of de-escalation techniques is highly effective. Staff are able to effectively deflate situations by using simple hand gestures, which enable young people to lower their voice and explain why they are upset. This effectively avoids the behaviour escalating to a level where the residential pupils becomes distressed and place themselves or others at the risk of harm.

Young people say that they do occasionally argue with their friends, but acknowledged it is important to say sorry. Residential pupils are rarely held by staff, however, all such occasions are carefully documented. Residential pupils rarely go missing. However there are effective procedures in place should this occur which are based on the individual needs of the residential pupils. Staff are extremely vigilant and are aware that bullying could take place. Effective strategies are in place for managing any accusations of bullying. Residential pupils are provided with support from staff and outside agencies to help them to understand what bullying is and what to do about it.

Residential pupils are protected from hazards, such as fire. Fire drills are carried out each term in the houses. Young people have an excellent understanding of the fire evacuation procedures. They confidently explain what they do when the alarm goes off and remind others that they should always wear slippers in case it is wet or cold outside. Risk assessments for the school are very detailed and clearly identify any risks and how these are to be minimised. However, some risk assessments for outings do not clearly identify the staff that are going on the trip. The use of initials on risk assessments can lead to confusion where two members of staff have the same initials.



## **Leadership and management of the residential provision**

The leadership and management of the residential provision is outstanding. The care provision is led by a dedicated head of care who wants the very best for each residential pupil. Staff are passionate about what they do and their commitment to providing high quality childcare to each residential pupil is highly commendable. The school prides itself on reducing barriers so that each residential pupil makes as much progress as possible in line with their starting points. Residential pupils are at the very heart of everything the school does with the main aim of helping them to lead rich, fulfilling lives. Residential pupils and their parents are fully included in the life of the school. Parents are very complimentary about the school; they say that staff often go the extra mile for the pupils.

There are always sufficient staff on duty to meet the needs of the residential pupils. As a result, residential pupils feel valued, supported, respected and are able to engage in activities of their choice. Staff receive high levels of training and support. This means they are highly effective in their roles and are able to consistently meet the ever changing needs of the residential pupils. Staff are pleased that they have the opportunities to engage in training outside of their immediate remit such as, a diploma in information technology. They say they feel very well supported by senior staff and managers.

The governing body plays an active role in monitoring the quality of the care provision. This ensures the care provision is continually evolving and adapting to meet the residential pupils needs. A designated safeguarding governor works closely with the principal when required. The school regularly evaluates the care provision and is proactive in addressing any potential shortfalls, for example, ensuring the current policies and procedures fully meet the new national minimum standards.

The recommendation from the previous inspection has been met. Residential pupils are now encouraged to sign and make comment in the sanctions record. Staff also record if a residential pupils declines to make comment. This provides transparency and enables residential pupils to have an additional voice in the care provided.

Residential pupils benefit from an exceptionally well planned and organised residential experience which provides extremely positive outcomes for each young person. Residential pupils are thriving in a caring, child focussed and compassionate environment that enables young people to develop to their full potential. Residential pupils are complimentary about their experiences and say one of the best things about staying at school is that they are with their friends.

## **National minimum standards**

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

## **What should the school do to improve further?**

- ensure risk assessments for outings and activities clearly identify the member of staff taking responsibility for specific tasks to ensure the safety and well-being of residential pupils.



**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.**



27/09/2011

Dear Residential Pupils

### **Inspection of West Kirby Residential School**

I would like to thank all of you for completing our survey and for taking the time to talk to me during the recent inspection. Your views are very important to me and helped me to make some decisions about the residential provision. I also took into consideration what your parents and carers had to say about the school. As a result I think you are cared for in an outstanding school.

I think staff want the very best for each of you and go out of their way to ensure you have all the help and support you need. It was wonderful to see you all enjoying yourselves on your various outings. Thank you to those of you who allowed me to go bowling with them, I had a fabulous time. It was great to hear that you are taking part in activities that are important to you such as football trials, dance and mixing music in recording studios.

Staff are committed to keeping you safe and ensure that you get the right help and support when you need it most. They look after you when you are ill and ensure you get your medication at the right time. You enjoy a wide range of healthy meals and snacks. It was great to hear how certain staff make the best meals, such as bacon sandwiches.

It was great to hear how you feel at home here and how you have a big say in how things are organised. Your views are very important to staff, who want you to thoroughly enjoy your residential experience. You are able to personalise your bedrooms and some of you are looking forward to decorating your new rooms with staff.

Thank you once again for all your help it was an absolute pleasure to meet you all and to see how well you are all doing.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Scully

