

Elemore Hall School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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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

This is a maintained residential special school for up to 72 boys and girls aged 11 - 16 years. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs due to social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The school is located a few miles outside the centre of Durham. It is a converted country house in its own grounds and has a residential facility for up to 25 boys split between two units. Accommodation is provided for up to four nights a week but is not provided at weekends or during school holidays.

The school also provides an extended school day service for some boys and girls until 6pm or 8pm. The last inspection of the residential provision took place in November 2010.

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	good

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of Elemore Hall School is outstanding. There are substantial strengths in the quality of provision and care for residential pupils. The experience of being resident clearly enables residential pupils to make excellent progress in their educational, personal and social development.
- Residential pupils receive high levels of support and guidance from enthusiastic and dedicated staff team at the school. There are excellent relationships between the young people themselves and with the staff who look after them. There is a strong commitment to promoting equality and diversity and the residential pupils gain greatly from opportunities to meet people from different countries and cultures.
- Residential pupils enjoy staying at the school and feel extremely safe due to the robust and effective safeguarding procedures in operation.
- The school offers an extensive range of high quality activities after school which enables residential pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and interests.
- There are plentiful opportunities for residential pupils to contribute their views and they feel that the school listens to them and makes changes as a result.
- The behaviour of residential pupils is excellent. The school has effective anti-bullying measures in place and all incidents are quickly and effectively managed.
- There is a continual focus on the improvement and development of boarding practice. Progress has been substantial since the last inspection. In particular, there have been significant improvements to fire safety.
- The school meets all the national minimum standards.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Residential pupils thoroughly enjoy the experience of staying overnight and feel safe and relaxed in the residential environment. They take every opportunity to participate in the outstanding range of activities on offer, whether it is playing football in an indoor arena or learning about 'bush craft' in the school grounds. There are excellent relationships within the residential units and residential pupils enjoy the time they spend with the care staff on duty. They say they 'enjoy the banter' and 'there are staff to have a laugh with.' The care staff know all the residential pupils well and are extremely committed to their wellbeing.

Residential pupils' development is excellent. They make considerable progress in their personal and social development whilst at the school. Their self-esteem, independence and confidence is improved and they are given opportunities to learn new skills. The behaviour of the residential pupils is outstanding. Incidents of any kind in residential time are extremely rare, especially those requiring a physical intervention. Residential pupils are tolerant of each other and say that the opportunities to visit other countries and to meet with young people from different cultures promotes their understanding of others.

Residential pupils feel safe and are appreciative of the guidance and support provided by a wide range of dedicated staff. They enjoy the time spent with them and feel that their views are listened to and that changes are made as a result.

Residential pupils are active participants in keeping themselves as fit and healthy as possible. They report that the arrangements are highly effective in promoting and maintaining their physical, emotional and psychological health.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the residential provision is outstanding. Residential pupils receive excellent levels of guidance and support from all staff at the school. There are very effective systems in place for ensuring that information is shared between the residential units and the school, for example there are handover meetings twice a day to discuss events and individual pupils. The residential pupils are clear that they can go to anyone in the school for help. In addition to members of the school staff, there are external adults such as the school nurse, the anti-bullying worker and the educational psychologist who visit the school on a weekly basis whom the young people can talk to. In particular the educational psychologist works individually with some young people providing emotional support. There are excellent relationships between the young people and the care staff and the residential pupils feel well supported by them. Effective support is provided to new pupils as well as appropriate guidance and information well in advance of leaving the school by the school's

transitions coordinator. There are good opportunities for the residential pupils to develop daily living skills such as cooking, washing and ironing as well as travelling independently on public transport and using public amenities such as the local library.

Residential pupils' physical, emotional and social development needs are well promoted. They are encouraged to participate in a range of positive activities that contribute to their physical and emotional health. For example, physical activity is encouraged and there are smoking cessation courses for those who smoke. One residential pupil commented that the support provided by the member of care staff who ran the smoking cessation course, directly led him to be successful in giving up smoking for good. The school also has a large allotment in the grounds for growing fresh vegetables which they use in the kitchen.

There are comprehensive arrangements in place for the safe storage and administration of medication. Additional safeguards are in place regarding the recording of controlled drugs and all care staff have received training in administering medication. Health care plans are in place for pupils with additional medical needs such as epilepsy and diabetes. The school has effective links with local mental health teams and an educational psychologist provides weekly one to one sessions with some pupils. Parents retain responsibility for taking the young people for appointments to the doctor and dentist.

Residential pupils are provided with a nutritious, balanced and varied diet. There is a good choice of food provided at all meals. Since the last inspection, a 'deli bar' has been added at lunch and tea which consists of a range of sandwiches and rolls and a small salad bar. This provides an extra choice to pupils and is proving popular. The school caters appropriately for pupils' religious and cultural needs, vegetarians and special diets. Food is in plentiful supply and of good quality and residential pupils have ready access to drinks, fresh fruit and other snacks. Water coolers around the school enable pupils to have a constant supply of drinking water. Residential pupils enjoy the food and mealtimes are sociable occasions with staff and pupils eating together. Residential pupils say that they are able to put forward their views about the menus and that changes are made as a result such as the introduction of the 'deli bar.'

Residential pupils take part in an exceptionally wide range of activities after school. Every evening, there is a choice of four or five activities taking place both on and off the school site. The activities are immensely popular with pupils, some of whom stay on an extended day until 6pm or 8pm to take part. All activities are staffed by care staff as well as by other members of school staff who work later on specific evenings to cover these activities.

The residential accommodation is of a high standard. There is a rolling programme of refurbishment and all areas are clean, well decorated and maintained. The bedrooms are spacious and most residential pupils share a room with one other when they stay. Since the last inspection, the lounge in one of the residential units has been

refurbished with new settees, a new carpet, curtains and coffee table. The other unit has had new settees and further work is planned in the kitchen and to renovate the showers. All residential pupils are provided with keys to their bedrooms when they are resident and they are able to securely lock away their belongings if they wish.

Residential pupils can easily contact family and friends. Most have their own mobile telephones and can also access landline telephones in the residential units. Staff contact parents on a regular basis both by telephone and e-mail. There is regular contact between parents and the care staff which is well recorded. The residential units have a new care planning system in place. This new system has only just become operational and an area for future development is ensuring that the implementation of the new placement plans is monitored. The care planning complemented by the excellent termly Progress and Achievement meetings (PAMS). These meetings are attended by the personal and teacher tutors as well the pupil and the parents or carers. Feedback from pupils is that they enjoy participating in these meetings and setting targets for their future development.

Residential pupils' safety

The school makes outstanding provision to safeguard residential pupils' welfare. There are robust and thorough procedures in place for staff recruitment which ensure that pupils are well protected. Some school staff and governors have attended training in safer recruitment and there is a clear understanding of all the necessary checks which need completing before a new member of staff starts work at the school. Staff files are well maintained and evidence that all the required checks have been completed. Pupils are actively involved in recruitment with members of the school council interviewing all new staff.

Protecting children has high priority within the school. Three members of staff are the designated persons for child protection matters at the school and all have received appropriate training for this role within the last two years. All staff receive training in child protection annually and are alert to possible concerns. Links with the local authority are positive and appropriate discussions take place. As a result of these measures, boarders are well protected and say they feel extremely safe at the school.

The school has positive and proactive behaviour management strategies which are consistently applied. There is an emphasis on rewarding positive behaviour with the earning of learning credits and merit awards. Residential pupils understand the behaviour expected of them and behaviour in the residential units is excellent. Incidents are well recorded including those that include a physical intervention. Staff are trained in managing behaviour with an appropriate emphasis on the de-escalation of incidents. All incidents are monitored to ensure that it is managed in the best way possible. Pupils are encouraged to give their views and to sign the form. The year on year monitoring of incidents shows a huge reduction in the number of incidents, including those requiring a physical intervention. For example, in the last

three years the number of physical interventions has reduced by almost a third. As a result, the residential pupils feel safe and that the staff are fair in their response to incidents. Sanctions are limited and those permitted are well known to staff and pupils. Central records are maintained which are monitored. Residential pupils say that few punishments in the boarding houses are given and that poor behaviour is discussed with them.

The school is proactive in raising awareness of bullying. Since the last inspection, an external anti-bullying worker is working at the school one day each week. As a result, the school's anti-bullying policy is being reviewed and individual meetings have taken place with all pupils to discuss bullying. This is an excellent initiative which enhances the robust anti-bullying culture taken by the school. Residential pupils are clear that bullying is rare and that any incidents are quickly and effectively dealt with by the staff team.

Extensive measures are in place to ensure that the school and the residential units houses provide a safe environment. There are effective security measures in place on the school site including closed circuit television cameras. Electrical safety checks are regularly and routinely carried out and there are risk assessments completed for the building and pupils' activities. Some of these have been in place for some time and a review would ensure consistency practice and clarify the monitoring arrangements while the head of care is absent.

Effective fire safety measures are in place. Regular drills take place and there is routine checking and maintenance of the equipment. Staff and residential pupils are aware of the actions to take in the event of a fire and new residential pupils are taken through the fire procedures. Since the last inspection, the school has undertaken significant work improving its fire safety following an external risk assessment.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The leadership and management of boarding is good. There are clear aims for residential placements which are reflected in daily practice. The residential aspect is an important part of the school and care staff are enthusiastic and committed to it. They recognise the diverse needs of pupils and plan for them so that each young person is enabled to develop and achieve well. The education and care staff work well together and a number of the education staff work into the evening to supervise the activities. In addition, the senior care staff work some days as daytime duty coordinators. This ensures that all staff know the pupils well and are knowledgeable about what happens during the day as well as in the evenings.

The school promotes equality and diversity well. Diverse needs are catered for sensitively and this results in fair and equal treatment for all pupils and an atmosphere of tolerance and respect. The school has links with organisations which has meant that pupils and staff have visited a number of different countries. Visits have taken place to Italy and Turkey and there is a forthcoming visit to a school in Tanzania involving care staff and residential pupils. Students from these overseas schools also make reciprocal visits. From spending time with young people from different countries, the pupils develop their understanding of different countries and cultures.

Residential pupils are able to contribute their views and feel that changes are made as a result. For example, their views have been sought about the furnishings in the units and activities. The student council meets regularly and have been instrumental in changes being made to the school yard. Residential pupils know how to make a complaint and say that they feel listened to.

The residential units are staffed by a small team of dedicated and experienced care staff. There are sufficient staff on duty at all times who know the young people well and who provide good levels of consistency. All care staff have NVQ3 and there are opportunities for training and the development of specific areas of interest such as bush craft. Staff feel well supported by the senior leadership team who provide good levels of senior cover during the evenings.

There are arrangements for experienced staff to deputise for the head of care who has been absent since May 2011. Monitoring of the residential provision and its records is undertaken by the head teacher and members of the senior leadership team. Generally, there is effective monitoring of records except the risk assessments for activities which have not been monitored since the absence of the head of care. An independent visitor undertakes regular visits and writes a comprehensive report. Since the last inspection there is clear evidence that any recommendations made are followed up on subsequent visits.

There has been good improvement since the last inspection and the school has a clear and accurate evaluation of its performance and all required policies are in place and are implemented effectively. Relationships with parents are positive and supportive. One parent commented 'Elemore Hall School has helped my son in all ways, his education, life skills etc, he is very happy and is thriving at this school.'

National minimum standards

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

What should the school do to improve further?

- monitor the implementation of the placement plans for residential pupils
- ensure that the risk assessments for activities are reviewed and monitored

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.



04/10/2011

Dear residential pupils

Inspection of Elemore Hall School

As you will know, Ofsted recently inspected the boarding provision in your school. I visited both the residential units, Bede and Cuthbert and spoke to many of you and the staff who look after you when you stay overnight. Thank you for making me feel so welcome and for taking the time to show me round and tell me about your experience as residential pupils at the school. You also filled in our survey, as did your parents or carers, and this was very helpful.

The residential provision at Elemore Hall School is outstanding. The help and support you receive from the care staff is excellent and helps you prepare for your future life. It was great to hear about the brilliant range of activities you get involved in and how much you enjoy your time when you stay overnight at the school.

I was particularly impressed by your excellent behaviour and how well you get on with each other and with the care staff at the school. You really seem to enjoy each other's company. The school helps you grow into confident and independent young people. The school keeps you safe and you are able to give your views about what think should be changed.

I enjoyed meeting you and visiting your school. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Lucy Martin