

# Wargrave House School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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| <b>Unique reference number for social care</b> | SC022446                 |
| <b>Unique reference number for education</b>   | 134888                   |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>                        | 17/01/2012 to 19/01/2012 |
| <b>Inspector</b>                               | Elaine Clare             |

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| <b>School address</b>   | Wargrave House School, Wargrave Road, NEWTON-LE-WILLOWS, Merseyside, WA12 8RS |
| <b>Telephone number</b> | 01925 224 899   |
| <b>Email</b>            | enquiries@wargravehouse.com   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>      | Mrs Sheila Jaeger (Principal)   |

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Piccadilly Gate  
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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.<sup>1,2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

This is a non-maintained special school, established in 1971, for students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The school operates as a registered charity (charity number 1104715). It offers a day school, weekly and part-weekly residential boarding for up to 22 boys and girls who are aged from 5 to 19 years. Residential facilities are on-site both in the main school building and in the post-16 department, Lakeside. The school is on the outskirts of Newton-le-Willows, and within easy reach of major cities of Liverpool and Manchester. The school was last inspected in July 2010.

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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.

- This residential special school provides outstanding residential provision.
- A student wrote 'Thank you very much for being friends'.
- Students thrive within a nurturing environment which clearly focuses on their individuality.
- Students are encouraged, and do, make very good progress in all aspects of their lives. They are fully supported from a multi-professional team of staff who all work together to achieve and in many cases exceed their potential.
- The setting's safeguarding arrangements are excellent, with clear policies and procedures that provide maximum protection for students.
- Experienced and knowledgeable designated staff take the lead for child protection areas.
- Innovative and high standard systems allow staff to identify individual targets for students and to be able to monitor their progress. Students are very actively involved in their own target setting and attainment.
- High school attendance levels of students are supported by a range of multi-professional staff available on site.
- Students enjoy engaging in a wide range of activities both on and off site. They enjoy being involved in local and wider communities.
- There is excellent promotion of equality and diversity. This runs throughout all care practice and documentation. All students are treated fairly and without prejudice.

- Strong and effective leadership and management is fully supported by a pro-active governing body and board of trustees.
- Health and safety arrangements are organised and known to students, such as fire procedures.
- Excellent health provision is delivered by trained staff who liaise very closely with families and carers.
- The school has fully addressed the one recommendation made at the last inspection. Two further improvements could be made following this inspection in relation to mobile phones and recording students' views following physical intervention. However, these do not have any negative impact on the well-being or safety of the students.
- This ambitious school meets all the national minimum standards and has continued to develop its practice with ever improving outcomes for students since the last inspection.

## **Outcomes for residential pupils**

Outcomes for residential students are outstanding.

Residential students' development is outstanding. They live in a highly inclusive environment where respectful relationships between staff and their peers are forged and enjoyed by the students. Staff are extremely sensitive to individual needs and areas of difficulties. The staff team work closely with a wide range of professionals available on site, to provide a fully-integrated service for students. As a result students develop at their own pace in areas identified and meet or exceed targets set.

The vast majority of students feel safe at the setting, and all parents who completed pre-inspection questionnaires feel their children are safe at the setting. Behaviour management is structured, clear and competently delivered by staff. At times, when students feel increasingly vulnerable, staff raise the level of support on offer with very good outcomes. Behaviour management is outstanding considering the difficulties students present. The high levels of support from a wide range of professionals, including care staff, enable behaviour to be addressed and improved. Residential students are respectful of their differences, support each other and receive constant support from staff. The residential experience gives students the opportunity to develop independence skills at a pace they are able to manage. Participation in activities shows how much the students feel part of the residential community. They have a wide range of activities on offer, including activities in the local community such as local drama group. All activities are highly supported and enable students to be involved in the wider community.

Residential student's involvement in school meetings enables them to voice

suggestions and make contributions to the residential development. Changes have been made because of the school meetings. In addition students feel comfortable in voicing their feelings and views within the residential time to a wide range of staff. One student made reference in the questionnaire and during the inspection to an issue with mobile phones. The student was unhappy that mobile phones were taken from them during residential time. There was no issue with accessing them but the student would prefer to have them on their person.

Generally, residential students feel they are well cared for in relation to their health needs. Staff promote healthy lifestyles and encourage students to keep fit. The school's Personal, Health and Social Education programme covers areas such as sexual health, drugs, smoking and healthy lifestyles. Students can expect and receive much support to address any health needs they may have, together with support offered to families and carers to enable students to manage and improve their health status. Residential students are very well prepared for the next stage of their life after school. The post 16 service, Lakeside, provides an outstanding balance between independence and support. Students enjoy their experience in Lakeside and the opportunities it gives them. All students engage in further education within the school.

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

The quality of care is outstanding.

Residential students receive excellent pastoral provision with input from a wide range of professionals who work together. The level of support delivered, together with the fully integrated approach to care, results in excellent progress for students. Students benefit from the excellent working partnerships that exist between the care staff and academic staff. This is enhanced by collaborative working between the numerous other specialist staff on site. The overall result is a highly coordinated provision with appropriate and consistently high aspirations for the students.

Residential students enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities that are all risk assessed and highly supported by staff, providing enjoyable and safe activities. Involvement in the local and wider community enables students to experience activities outside the school setting and to learn social skills with peers and adults other than school staff. Students enjoy a wide range of activities in the school such as the 'Glee Club'. Students have fun competing, as do the staff team. Residential students have a clear voice in the running of the residential units and those with poor communication skills are enabled to voice their opinions too. No one is deemed unable to have a voice. Students' achievements are celebrated by certificates on display throughout the residential setting.

Staff place the well-being of students at the centre of their high-quality practice. Clear strategies, assessments and imaginative practice enable new ways to support students and enable them to make progress in all aspects of their lives, such as

improving behaviours and improved hygiene matters. An innovative and well-embedded system allows staff and students to identify areas to be addressed and set understandable and achievable individual targets. Progress is clearly tracked and recorded so excellent progress is evident. Students can see clearly how they have progressed and what areas they need to focus on. Placement plans and care plans are detailed. They show individual life stories and how students can make progress. Students are encouraged to take an active part in the planning and review of their care wherever possible. They know the contents of their plans and review their plans through regular key worker sessions. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place for any students who may be missing. Staff are well informed of and take correct action if a student does go missing.

Medical provision for ill students is very good. Committed and sensitive medical staff deliver comprehensively robust care. Staff are suitably qualified and experienced to deliver first aid. There is excellent contact and communication between the medical staff and parents and carer. This results in excellent outcomes for the students and clear continuity of care. All aspects of the health provision are of a very high standard. Residential students live in accommodation that ranges from good to outstanding. They are able to personalise their rooms and contribute to choices in the furnishings. Students like their accommodation and feel comfortable. Students enjoy most meals on their individual houses and food is always available. Lunch is taken in the school dining room all together and is a calm and suitable environment. The food on offer was of a very good quality and nutritious. Students with special diets are suitably catered for. The school had been recently awarded a 'five star' rating from Environmental Health for cleanliness and hygiene in the kitchen areas.

## **Residential pupils' safety**

Residential students' safety is at the heart of everything the school provides. Policies and procedures in practice provide enhanced protection. The vast majority of students feel safe at the setting and all parents feel their children are safe at the school. One parent wrote, 'our child is cared for in a nurtured structured environment which meets all her needs. The staff are professional and caring'.

Students are protected by the school's thorough recruitment procedures. Senior staff and governors are trained in safer recruitment standards. Residential students are further protected by the robust procedures for the vetting and supervision of all visitors. Residential students are cared for by staff who are fully trained in child protection procedures and receive regular refresher training. Staff are alert to possible concerns and refer to the trained and experienced designated member of staff who takes the lead in child protection. In addition, clear and robust procedures are in place if any concerns are raised about the headteacher. The governing body is fully involved in child protection matters. Very good levels of communication with the local child protection agencies are evident, with close working relationships in relation to any investigations. Investigations into allegations are handled fairly and quickly, in strict accordance with legislation.

Residential student behaviour, which at times are challenging, are managed very well. There is a clear focus on de-escalation in relation to extreme behaviour management. However, if a physical intervention is necessary, staff are appropriately trained to do this following guidance set down by the Department for Education. Clear records are kept and students are offered the opportunity to voice their comments on the restraint. However, this is not consistently recorded by all staff. Students are very well informed of denial of rights that are applied if necessary. Staff are fully informed of appropriate sanctions they can give and those that are not to be applied. All sanctions and interventions are monitored by staff with very good knowledge and understanding of current guidance. Students feel sanctions are fair and appropriate.

The setting has very good practices in place to counter bullying. The therapy staff form part of a whole school approach to tackling bullying behaviours. They provide restorative justice practices and offer a huge amount of support for both bullies and victims of bullying. The vast majority of students and parents feel the school deals with bullying well. Bullying tends to be verbal and staff are active in confronting this issue. The staff are committed to changing behaviours of a bullying nature. Incidents are relatively low because of quick and effective staff intervention. Overall, there is a clear and robust culture of anti-bullying which is promoted throughout the whole school.

Residential students benefit from attending a school where health and safety matters are effectively managed and addressed. The environment is safe and subject to routine checks including fire checks. Very regular fire evacuation drills take place and students' behaviour during evacuations is excellent. Students are very well informed of health and safety matters and will highlight any areas to staff. The setting is secure.

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

The leadership and management of the residential provision are outstanding.

There are clear aims for the residential provision. These aims are translated into practice, and are exceeded in many ways, especially in relation to outcomes for students. There is a culture of celebrating and empowering each young person to achieve their unique potential. Residential students contribute to the running of the setting. They respond well to the supportive, nurturing environment, which stimulates their personal development. They successfully engage in a wide range of activities, which contribute to their educational learning. This provides them with fulfilling and realistic experiences that they can take into their adult lives. Residential students benefit from a stable, committed and highly experienced senior leadership team. A parent wrote, 'boarding overall is organised and managed effectively'. The multi-disciplinary approach to care focuses on promoting the best outcomes for young people. Students are at the heart of innovative person-centred planning,

which fully reflects their individuality.

There is a culture of continuous improvement and excellence. Students receive care from a well-supported staff team. Staff receive specialist training which enables them to deliver a high quality service. The expectations regarding staff vocational training is fully supported by the leadership team, including the governing body and trustees. A staff member commented, 'I strongly believe that the school offers outstanding education and care provision, is open to ideas for improving the service and puts the needs of students and their families at the centre'. Residential students know how to and feel confident in raising a concern or complaint; these are handled quickly, effectively and are very low in number.

Young people thrive within an environment which promotes their well-being and gives them stability and happiness. There is excellent promotion of equality and diversity. This runs like a thread throughout all care practices and documentation. This is assisted by comprehensive quality assurance and monitoring. The school has fully addressed the one recommendation made at the last inspection. All staff have now completed a first aid course. There is an excellent understanding and implementation of the new national minimum standards. The service is continually evolving to meet the needs of the students.

## **National minimum standards**

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

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

- implement a proportionate approach to the use of mobile phones by students in out of school hours
- ensure students have their opinions sought and recorded following an incident that requires a physical intervention.

**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.**



17/01/2012

Hello Students

**Inspection of Wargrave House School**

I am from Ofsted and I came to inspect your school.

You said you feel happy at the school. I liked watching you dance.

You are well looked after by staff.

The school is a safe place to be, you know what to do when the fire alarm goes off.

The food in school is yummy.

Thank you for showing me your outstanding school.

Yours sincerely,

Elaine Clare