

Rowdeford 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

The school is a secondary (11 -16 years), co-educational, special school for pupils with complex learning disabilities. This includes pupils whose measured ability and attainment place them on either the moderate learning difficulties spectrum, or at the top end of the severe learning difficulties spectrum. Many pupils also have associated medical conditions and/or syndromes. All are considered to be 'socially vulnerable'. The school provides a boarding provision for up to 23 pupils of mixed gender. All pupils admitted to the school are subject to a Statement of Special Educational Needs. The subject of this report is to focus on the weekly residential care provision.

This school is situated in a Grade II listed Georgian house, set in 20 acres of parkland on the outskirts of a village.

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 the residential provision is outstanding. The quality of the residential provisions has a very positive impact on the development of young people social skills, self-esteem, self-confidence and educational achievement.
- The school is an inclusive environment which celebrates the individual and provides young people with excellent opportunities for growth and development. Equality and diversity is well understood and practiced at the school which in turn ensures that the needs of the individual young people are extremely well met.
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- There is excellent consultation and involvement of young people in all aspects of their care and the day-to-day life at the school. Young people feel that their ideas and views are valued, important and where possible acted upon.
- There is excellent consultation and involvement of young people in all aspects of their care and the day-to-day life at the school. Young people feel that their ideas and views are valued, important and where possible acted upon.
- Staff are very committed and proactive in ensuring young people needs are met. This is enhanced by the staff continuing to develop their skills and expertise through excellent development opportunities which ensures they are kept informed of current practice and legislation.
- The residential provision is extremely well managed. Staff report they feel well supported by both senior management and colleagues enabling them to provide a high level of support to young people.
- There are effective and robust monitoring systems in place to safeguard young

people and these include regular visits from one of the governors.

- The residential accommodation is of a good standard and provides young people with a comfortable and relaxed environment in which to live.
- Young people's safety is protected with robust systems of risk assessments, recruitment and health and safety procedures.
- The school meets all the national minimum standards. There was one recommendation made at the last inspection. This was to ensure that all the relevant recruitment checks are obtained prior to staff commencing employment, this has been complied with.
- The school needs to ensure that when asthma inhalers are not stored in their box administration instructions are on the actual inhaler.

Outcomes for residential pupils

The outcomes for young people are outstanding. The relationships between the young people and the staff are extremely positive and form the core basis for all work at the school. Staff are extremely knowledgeable about the individual needs of each young person. The stability of the staff team has facilitated positive relations and means that staff know each young person well. They are attentive and demonstrate a high degree of commitment to young people.

As a result young people are very positive about the staff who look after them. They said being at the school was 'like having a second family/home', 'I have made loads of new friends', 'its brilliant being here' and 'everyone is seen as important'. They said the staff are 'fun to be with and look after me very well'. The school is an inclusive and very caring community where people support, respect one another and feel safe. Young people said they have gained much more self-confidence since being at the school and they enjoy the fact that they are encouraged and enabled to do things for themselves.

There are excellent systems in place which ensure staff listen to the views of young people and include them in the day-to-day operation of the residential unit. Young people said there are always lots of different activities and events they can take part in and they are encouraged to put forward their own ideas. Young people said they feel that staff welcome and value their input into the school life. There are various methods by which they can make their views/ideas known and were able to provide a lot of examples where this has happened. The school council is very effective and has the confidence of all the young people in boarding who said 'the council gets things sorted out for us'. The student body has recently been involved in deciding the equipment for the new playground. Young people said they were very proud to have been involved in this consultation process.

As well as involvement in the decision-making process for school projects, the young

people are fully involved in developing their individual goals and targets. This ensures that young people are well supported in developing a sense of self-confidence and self-worth and are driven to achieve positive outcomes for themselves. A young person said it was vital they are involved in this as it is decisions about their life.

The behaviour of boarders is excellent. This can be linked to the quality of the individual work the school undertakes with the young people, the strength of the relationships between staff and young people and the level of involvement that young people have in defining their own care packages with the assistance of staff. There is a strong focus on positive reinforcement of good behaviours. Expectations of behaviour are high and well defined. Young people know what is expected and adhere to this.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the boarding provision is outstanding. The staff team are very experienced, dedicated and very young person focused. The staff team provide the young people with excellent pastoral care and involve them in all aspects of their care and assessment of progress. They also continuously strive to raise the quality of the service they provide to the young people and to meet the ever changing needs of young people placed with them. Staff have high expectations and aspirations for the young people in their care. For example the team carry out individual work around self-esteem and self-confidence. This is achieved by the staff team providing the young people with the excellent opportunities, and activities to develop these skills, such as the development of independent living skills and involvement in community activities.

Young people are able to engage in a vast range of activities both on and away from the school site. Staff see it as vital that young people access activities in the community as this helps them to develop and extend their social networks, as well as self-confidence. For example young people enjoy attending local youth groups and mixing with people of their own age outside of the school community. At the core of the staff's work is their commitment to the young people they care for and their drive to enable the young people to reach their full potential. This work is supported by extremely comprehensive care plans, which the young people are again fully involved in developing and reviewing.

Staff ensure that they empower young people and ensure that their views are integral to their practice. An excellent example of this is support staff have provided to enable young people to devise a system which allows them to contribute to the daily records that staff complete. The system is very effective and has been developed using a set of symbols which were chosen and understood by young people as well as free text which ensures that all young people can access the system.

The school promotes a healthy life style through its activities programme, healthy

eating and education. The provision of meals at the school is nutritious and varied. Mealtimes are seen as important social events in the school day. Young people spoke highly of the catering staff saying how the food 'just gets better and better'. They also said the catering staff are very friendly and ask for their feedback on the meals provided.

Health care at the school is exceptionally well organised which ensures young people receive a high standard of service. Some of the young people attending the school have increased medical needs and the staff team have responded quickly to meet these by accessing additional training where required. However despite repeated requests from the staff team they have received insufficient and inconsistent nursing support from the Health Authority.

Excellent records of all medication stored, administered and disposed of are maintained and all medication is stored securely. However, several asthma inhalers were not in their box and did not have the administration instructions on the actual inhaler. This could lead to inaccurate dosage being given.

The care staff support residential pupils in their education. During the evenings they listen to them reading and young people are able to access online school educational programmes. The school has carried out some analysis of the impact that boarding has on the young people's educational achievements. Although the numbers in this survey are small they do indicate a positive impact with boarders achieving high results.

The residential accommodation is of a good standard and the staff work very hard to provide a comfortable homely environment for the young people. All the units are well equipped and maintained to a high standard. Young people are very proud of their rooms and they are encouraged to personalise this space. They said they felt very safe at the school.

Residential pupils' safety

The judgement for safeguarding is outstanding. Young people's safety and well-being are at the core of all work undertaken by the school. Safeguarding policies and procedures are robust and adhered to. Staff demonstrate a clear working knowledge which is supported by a robust training programme and a strong working relationship with local authorities. This ensures that staff are alert to possible concerns, and champion young peoples welfare and safety.

Preventative strategies are in place to avoid incidents of bullying. There are underpinned by an exceptionally strong ethos that supports respect for the individual, tolerance and acceptance which is apparent in all aspects of school life. Young people said that bullying at the school is not an issue, not acceptable and would quickly be sorted out by staff. Young people said they felt very safe at the school and feel comfortable in reporting to staff any concerns they may have. Staff

support young people to learn how to develop their skill in keeping themselves safe. This includes providing each young person with information about personal safety, developed in line with individual communication needs.

The basis of behaviour management at the school is that of positive reinforcement and proactive behaviour strategies which are developed through the staff's in-depth knowledge of the young people they care for. This is supported by newly developed and well-thought-out individual behaviour plans, where the staff team have identified a need. These plans ensure consistency of approach across the school campus which ensures that young people know what is expected. The school does train some of the staff team in restraint techniques but this is rarely used and avoided where ever possible. Staff understand the importance of engaging young people positively. The main focus of training on behaviour management is in the use of de-escalation techniques. Where restraint is used appropriate records are maintained. There have been no restraints in boarding since the last inspection.

The school has an outstanding recruitment and vetting process involving checks over and above required by the national minimum standards for new staff. This is robustly adhered to and supported by exemplary records. This serves to prevent employment of unsuitable individuals.

Health and safety at the school is taken very seriously. There are robust systems of risk assessment for all aspects of life at the school. This helps to keep young people staff and visitors safe from hazards.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

Leadership and management at the school is outstanding. The aims of the residential facility are clear with young people being extremely well supported and cared for by a very experience, committed staff team. There is a high ratio of staff to young people, which clearly supports the needs of the young people. The staff team are very positive about the senior management team at the school. They said there is a true open door policy and managers are: 'approachable', 'welcome our ideas' and 'include us in developments for the school'.

There is a comprehensive training schedule which is flexible so as to respond to the developing and changing needs of the young people enabling staff to meet young people's needs well. All staff receive supervision at the required intervals and an annual appraisal ensuring that their work with young people is well monitored and that staff feel valued and supported in their professional development by managers.

The senior management team create an ethos of consultation which runs across the whole school environment and permeates all those working, living and accessing the school's services. The feedback that the school received from the consultation is used in devising the school's development plans. The senior management team has a proven track record of continual improvement which has been demonstrated in their

previous inspections reports. This is echoed in the drive of the staff team who continue to ask, 'what can we do next?' Results of these consultations have been very positive which was reflected in the surveys Ofsted received. These included comments from parents such as 'superb staff', 'a centre of excellence', and 'their independence skills and personal self esteem and self respect are qualities I have enjoyed progressing while they have been a boarder'. Professionals who have contact with the school have supported this view. One said the young person they have at the school repeatedly tells them that they love boarding; this reflects the levels of support and care.

Senior managers ensure that robust management systems are in place and there is clear evidence of action being taken in the light of any shortfalls. The management team and the school governors carry out the quality assurance process with vigilance in order to ensure continuous improvements in standards of care. All policies and procedures are on a rolling review cycle, which ensures they reflect current practice and legislation. Equal opportunities are embedded in all of the school policies and are throughout all aspect of the schools work and ethos.

Excellent communication with parents and other professionals is a major strength of the school. Parents said that staff are open and respond quickly to any questions or concerns they may have. External professionals involved with the school also hold this view.

All records at the school are securely stored.

National minimum standards

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

What should the school do to improve further?

- ensure all medication have clear administration details. In particular all asthma inhalers.

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.



20/01/2012

Inspection of Rowdeford School

Dear Boarders

Thank you for helping me with the inspection of your school. I rated your school as outstanding at this inspection. This means that it provides you with an outstanding standard of care.

You are really well supported to keep fit and healthy, staff give you advice about your health and help you get specialist health support if you need this. Medication arrangements are excellent and extremely well organised which helps to keep everyone healthy and safe. You are encouraged to eat healthily and are very happy with the food provided.

You live in a safe, warm, supportive and caring environment, where excellent relationships exist between you and staff. Staff also respect your privacy whilst keeping you safe. You commented that you like the staff and enjoy spending time with them.

You are aware of what is expected of you in terms of your behaviour and you know that good behaviour is rewarded. You conduct yourselves in a polite and well-mannered way. You have key workers and they and the staff team provide you with excellent individual support. Through your key worker, house meetings, school council and talking to staff you are able to put forward your ideas and be involved in the choice of decoration and furniture.

Staff support you with your education and you make good progress. You are encouraged and supported to take part in a very wide range activities at school and in the community.

The school ensures that all staff are very thoroughly checked and suitable before they work with you. There are always enough staff on duty to meet all your needs. All of the staff are well trained and they all have a lot of experience to look after you in all aspects of your care.

This is an extremely well-managed school and you are happy and well supported with everything you need.

Yours sincerely,

Wendy Anderson