

Grateley House 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

Grateley House is an independent residential special school that is part of Cambian Education Services, a national company that specialises in providing residential care and education for young people on the autistic spectrum. The school provides co-educational termly residential care and education for students from 9 to 19 years of age with Asperger's Syndrome and associated difficulties within the autistic spectrum. The school has 42 residential places and a small number of day placements. At the time of the inspection the majority of house bases were of mixed gender. Two of the purpose-built house bases on site accommodate post-16 students who undertake a 'Moving On' programme. The school provides therapeutic support services for students. The residential provision was last inspected in September 2010.

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

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boardingschools.

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 provision of residential care in the school is outstanding. The school is led by an extremely strong, experienced and committed leadership team. Excellent management ensures the school is able to sustain and improve on outstanding outcomes.
- The culture of the school places the needs of students at its core. Students are empowered to contribute fully to their individual plans and have their views, ideas and wishes considered. There is excellent promotion of equality and diversity with the atmosphere being one of mutual respect and understanding. Students really enjoy living at the school and benefit from being cared for by staff who know them very well.
- Safeguarding is embedded in the culture of the school and the measures it takes to keep students safe. Excellent health and safety arrangements keep students as safe as possible.
- Students have excellent guidance to progress and develop as individuals and to achieve significant progress. Positive relationships between students and staff are a particular strength of the school. Excellent school-wide communication ensures a continuity of care is maintained by all staff.
- Students receive excellent health care provision. Expert therapeutic advice and guidance is readily available which ensures a holistic approach. The school ensures students receive high standards of meal provision in a healthy and individualised manner.
- A high standard of accommodation is provided for students. Since the last inspection improvements have been made with a number of living areas being

refurbished and the dining room being completely redecorated and re-designed.

- Students receive excellent care, support and guidance and enjoy extremely positive relationships with staff. Outstanding key-working ensures students receive significant input from specific staff. Students benefit from being inducted into school life thoughtfully. Excellent support and planning greatly assist students during their stay and in particular when the time comes for them to move on.
- Staff are committed and dedicated to their roles and responsibilities and provide excellent standards of care. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the excellent communication about their children.
- The sole recommendation made at the last inspection has been addressed with very good outcomes. All national minimum standards are met and the school has continued to progress, putting the development of the students first to enable them to move on successfully.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Students receive outstanding levels of care, support and guidance. An excellent approach ensures their individual needs are firmly at the centre of the culture of the school. A holistic ethos is evident with staff caring and educating students in a manner that promotes the notion of shared aims and goals. Students noted that, 'the school is like a family...I get the best help with my problems'. Similarly parents commented that, 'they have made immense progress since being at the school...my child would not have done anywhere near as well without the support and professionalism of the whole staff team...the school is just brilliant'.

Students are supported to develop safe and meaningful relationships with staff and their peers and to make progress in their learning and personal development. The school harbours a sense of community where mutual respect is promoted as the cornerstone of day-to-day life. Students commented most positively on the support they receive and clearly make significant progress from their starting points on arrival. One student said that, 'this is the best school ever...who look after me so well and help me learn'. No student raised any concerns that bullying was an issue and indeed were seen to live together with understanding and care. Students are an active part of the school and contribute fully to important decisions about the way it is run. They stated, 'I am always listened to', and feel comfortable talking openly about school, their peers and staff. Connections between life within school, such as the food committee, and in the wider community, including charity fund raising events, allow students opportunities to consider not only their own needs, but also those of others.

The health needs of students are promoted to an excellent standard. Students feel looked after and cared for when they are ill. The holistic approach of the school incorporates specialist input through an Multi Disciplinary Team including psychiatry,

psychology, speech therapy and Occupational Therapy and Art Psychotherapy. The routines and support students receive from the staff also enable them to feel safe and very closely supported. Students receive excellent meal provision and say they enjoy the standard of food on offer. A balanced approach ensures students are encouraged to eat healthily while their individual needs are catered for. Pathway planning is excellent with students receiving comprehensive advice and guidance to assist them to prepare for life after leaving the school. The school works extremely hard to identify the right community based resources for students once they leave. Close working links are maintained between other schools, colleges, potential employers and placing authorities to identify the most appropriate levels of support and in turn help to reduce levels of anxiety or uncertainty.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of residential provision and care is outstanding. An excellent approach toward pastoral care ensures each student is cared for in a way which best meets their individual needs. A rigorous process of care planning and review encompasses a multidisciplinary approach and close links between educational, therapeutic and residential care staff ensure joined up care. Students themselves and their parents or carers play a crucial role in developing plans and in reviewing their effectiveness. Care plans are extremely detailed and link easily with all other key documentation providing a thorough view of each student's needs and their progress and development. The concept of key working is fundamental to the individualised approach to care, being embedded in practice across the school. Students have regular sessions with their key workers which enable them to develop both in an educational and pastoral sense during the school day. Care staff clearly understand the individual needs of students and are provided with expert advice and guidance to meet such needs.

Students are provided with many opportunities to enjoy activities and pastimes, both in the school and the wider community. Facilities on site give students a good amount of outdoor space, including sports fields and hard court play areas. There are regular outings after school to nearby towns and places of interest. As a result, students gain confidence and make progress in their personal development. Students over 16 years are encouraged to take more age-appropriate responsibility and benefit greatly from living in post-16 accommodation with staff supporting them toward a more independent outlook. The school provides excellent opportunities for students to take on appropriate roles of responsibility. An active and purposeful school council incorporates a student from each residential house; this allows for easy expression of requests, ideas or concerns. The forum is excellently facilitated by senior managers from care and education which ensures the views of students are heard and responded to by all significant adults involved in the running of the school.

The medical needs of students are well known, planned for and met. A dedicated nursing team is available on site and ensures direct health care and robust medication practice. The therapy team play a vital role in providing additional support

and guidance and in formulating comprehensive plans of care, including therapeutic interventions. The multi disciplinary team provide specific individual programmes. Liaison with external health care providers, including child and adolescent mental health teams, ensures students with such needs have them addressed consistently. Students benefit from sensitive and effective arrangements for providing support to those new to the residential provision. At the outset, key information is sought and considered to ensure each student's transition into school is as planned and smooth as possible. Students felt they were given considerable information about the school before they arrived and, 'great support' from staff when they moved in.

Boarding accommodation is of a high standard, being comfortable and well maintained. Students are able to personalise their own rooms which clearly helps them to create a more homely feel. Group living areas offer sufficient space and comfort, with students contributing to the homely décor with their own art work. Students benefit from extremely high standards of meal provision. Menus provide a nutritious, healthy and varied level of meal choices. Expert advice is readily available should there be any concerns or issues for the eating habits of particular students. Students who require special diets due to health issues or religious beliefs have specific menus put in place. Cultural diversity is appreciated through a variety of meal events ranging from celebrating Pancake Day to Polish meal day. Mealtimes are calm and ordered with staff providing balanced support when needed.

Residential pupils' safety

The safeguarding of students is outstanding. The school addresses student well-being rigorously, with students saying they feel safe living at the school. Staff display a sound understanding of child protection matters. They receive appropriate guidance and training and are guided by robust policies and procedures which are implemented in practice. There is a well established, dedicated and hugely experienced safeguarding team across the school. When issues arise they are addressed swiftly and in line with current child protection procedures. A comprehensive recruitment process ensures no staff work with students until all required checks have been completed. Recruitment records are comprehensive with existing staff having police checks completed every three years. A very stringent procedure is in place to ensure visitors to the site are suitably checked and supervised.

The approach to behaviour management is excellent. A comprehensive risk management framework supports students to learn and consider more appropriate ways in which to express their feelings. Staff are guided by comprehensive plans for intervention and support, which are reviewed regularly. The holistic nature of the school ensures all parties responsible for students are involved in behaviour management planning, including specialist input from the therapy department. Plans are implemented consistently and lead to students making considerable progress in reducing negative behaviour. It is rare for any pupil to go missing. If this occurs, very clear individual protocols are put in place to ensure the safety of the pupil. The

promotion of behaviour and tolerance is engrained in care practice; students have clear messages and guidance about how to treat others. No student raised any concerns that they were not treated fairly or with respect by their peers or others. The school actively encourages students to participate in awareness-raising in respect of inappropriate behaviours or attitudes. For example, they enabled them to help plan the national anti-bullying day.

The school strives to seek every possible solution to keeping students in placement: a committed and dedicated staff team are determined to assist students to manage their behaviour better and thus have improved life chances. Behaviour management strategies and approaches are thorough and thoughtful. On the few occasions that restraint is used, it is implemented appropriately and only for short periods of time. Staff are well trained in physical intervention with excellent review and monitoring procedures in place including de-brief sessions for staff and the students involved. Health and safety is given a high priority and students and staff alike are kept safe. Fire safety equipment is routinely serviced and tested, while regular fire evacuation drills, involving students, are carried out during the day and night. The school ensures all other areas of potential risk are fully addressed, such as the routine servicing of gas and electrical appliances. Risk assessment is robust and extremely comprehensive with on and off-site activities and circumstances being considered in full. Further assessments are completed by external monitoring contractors to ensure the whole environment is assessed objectively. An environmental health inspection took place in November of last year with the school receiving the highest award for cleanliness and hygiene.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The leadership and management of the school is outstanding. The school is run extremely efficiently with the needs of students at its core. The senior management structure ensures all parties understand and fulfil their roles and responsibilities. The management team expect high standards of practice which they themselves demonstrate by example. Staff are very well guided and say they feel supported in their roles. The school has in place a statement of purpose which provides clear aims and objectives. A development plan is also in place which incorporates residential provision and highlights the school's commitment to build on excellence and to continually improve. Robust procedures ensure the monitoring of residential care provision occurs routinely. An independent visitor completes the required monitoring visits, and reviews all key areas, such as complaints and the welfare of students. Reports are detailed and outline areas to be addressed. Following each monitoring visit a senior member of staff develops action plans to show that identified issues are resolved.

A sufficient number of staff are deployed both night and day to ensure students receive consistent care and support. Staff receive a high standard of induction and have good continued training and development opportunities. New staff are inducted alongside more established staff to ensure a suitable balance is maintained between

learning, development and the needs of the students. Staff receive very regular formal supervision; a real strength of the school is the excellent approach toward key-working with staff receiving additional supervision and guidance specifically to focus on aspects of their one-to-one working. Clear lines of responsibility ensure that performance is analysed with a view to sustaining high standards and improving on performance and delivery.

Communication between parents, carers and the school is excellent. Parents and carers stated they are always kept informed of matters affecting their particular young person and spoke most highly of the positive relationships they share with staff. The flow of information is regular with written, weekly reports complementing telephone calls made by key workers during the week. The school also ensures that placing authorities and other relevant agencies are kept up to date with any incidents of note or potential issues. Placing authorities confirmed the school works in partnership with them and is proactive in early identification of issues to ensure joint strategies are implemented in good time. The school is clearly aware of each student's individual needs and vulnerabilities and is mindful to assess and plan at every stage. The comprehensive assessment process prior to admission, coupled with the system of holistic on-going review, ensures students receive programmes of care which meet their specific needs. As a result students make excellent progress whilst at the school.

National minimum standards

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

What should the school do to improve further?

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.



05/03/2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Grateley House School

Some of you may remember that a short while ago that I came and inspected the boarding part of your school. I was shown round the school by students and was able to visit the houses and have a meal with some of you. I also spoke to quite a few of you, met with members of staff and looked at lots of records and paperwork. You may also remember completing a questionnaire which I looked at as well as some completed by your parents/carers. I found that you were all very helpful and honest.

I found that the school provide you with an excellent standard of care. I also feel that when you first come to the school that staff work very hard to help you deal with your problems and help you to make great progress. As well as helping you to go to school and learn staff also help you with other things like feelings and how to treat each other well.

I really feel the school is a safe place for you to live. It was really great to see the relationships which you have with members of staff and your key workers and for you to say that you can talk to them easily. In fact I noticed that the support you get is brilliant.

Your school is very well managed and you have a committed group of staff who look after you.

I saw that you have lots of activities which you can do both in the school and in the local community. Most of you said you had lots to do but also had time to relax after school if you wanted.

I was very impressed by the positive things you said about the school and by the way in which you behaved and talked to me. I was especially pleased by how relaxed and calm I found the school and how it seemed a really lovely place to live and learn.

Overall I was very impressed by your school and think that it does an excellent job at looking after you.

I really enjoyed meeting you all and wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Kevin Whatley