

# Pontville Residential School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Sonya Robinson

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<b>School address</b>	Pontville School, Black Moss Lane, ORMSKIRK, Lancashire, L39 4TW
<b>Telephone number</b>	01695 578734
<b>Email</b>	office@pontville.co.uk
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Iain Sim

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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 non-affiliated independent school is able to provide residential provision for up to 15 boarders in two residential units within the school itself. The school provides day places and boarding for both boys and girls with social communication difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, including attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autistic spectrum continuum and epilepsy. At the time of this inspection there were 73 pupils on roll and the school has capacity for 90 pupils in total. The residential facility provides care from Monday to Friday afternoon during term time only. The school is located in a residential area on the outskirts of a busy market town and is set in its own grounds. A range of community facilities in the town are available within walking distance. The last inspection was undertaken in March 2011.

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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 school has created a vibrant atmosphere where parents and staff work together to make sure residential pupils are safe, lead healthy lifestyles, enjoy learning, achieve and are prepared for adult life. Staff view residential pupils very positively. They are seen as individuals with different needs, tastes and interests.
- Residential pupils are thriving at this school. They describe it as the 'best school they have ever been to' and that they 'wouldn't be where they are today without the care and support of the staff'. There are excellent relationships between staff and residential pupils which enable them to be the best that they can be.
- Staff provide residential pupils with consistency, structure and routine; as a result they feel settled. Residential pupils have choice and opportunities to explore a range of sports and leisure activities that help them build-up talent and maximise their potential. The staff support of residential pupils aids them to pursue hobbies and interests and make these integral to day-to-day life.
- 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 school is managed by an experienced, qualified and competent headteacher and head of care. The organisation has a business plan in place which includes an improvement agenda. This demonstrates that they want to continually improve their service and the outcomes for residential pupils in their care. Staff are supported and have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities.
- The national minimum standards are met with no weaknesses identified which

have a direct impact upon the outcomes for residential pupils. There are two areas for improvement. These relate to residential pupils having information regarding the Children's Rights Director and the school updating the missing from care policy to reflect the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols.

## **Outcomes for residential pupils**

The outcome of the boarding experience is outstanding. Residential pupils enjoy exceptionally positive relationships with staff. They regularly engage in laughter with staff and clearly enjoy spending time with them, for example, going jogging or attending the gym. Residential pupils have a strong sense of belonging and have lots of positive things to say about staff. For example, 'Staff are always there for you whenever you need them', 'the staff are always smiling, that makes me happy' and that they are 'wonderful staff'. There is a strong sense of belonging and pupils have made firm friendships. They are respectful of one another and offer support to others when needed, such as gentle discussion about how they used to be when they first arrived.

Residential pupils develop solid independence skills, which enable them to prepare for adulthood through the excellent opportunities available. This includes life skills, such as cooking and shopping, along with taking part in external social activities to develop social skills and citizenship. Residential pupils are encouraged and enjoy the opportunities to help staff prepare meals, set the table and clear away afterwards. 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 or supported living accommodation. 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. Young people say that this school is the 'best thing that ever happened to them.'

Residential pupils are actively encouraged by staff and are exceptionally well supported to try new activities, such as playing tennis and attending cadets. As a result young people are continually improving in confidence and developing new skills and interests. Young people are proud of their achievements and are keen to show visitors photographs as proof.

The views of residential pupils are actively sought, valued and acted upon. Residential pupils contribute to the running of the care provision by putting forward suggestions for meals, activities and décor in their bedrooms. They feel valued as staff listen to them and act upon their requests, for example about window coverings and posters to display in their bedrooms.

Residential pupils are enthusiastic in keeping themselves fit and healthy. They have an excellent understanding of the importance of eating healthy eating. 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 have a thorough knowledge of each residential pupil's individual needs.

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

The quality of residential provision is outstanding. Residential pupils have fantastic opportunities to develop their community engagement. This means they are increasingly well prepared for their future lives in society. Residential pupils are able to exercise their rights, including how to access children's help lines and clearly say that they feel safe within this school. However, they do not have details of the Children's Rights Director, should they wish to contact him directly. Ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic diversity is fully recognised, valued and promoted throughout the whole school community.

School staff provide residential pupils with excellent pastoral care. Residential pupils can approach designated staff regarding their worries and these are addressed sensitively. All admissions are planned and there is a very caring and structured induction process for new pupils. Communication between care and educational staff is very effective, which helps to provide consistent support within the 24-hour curriculum.

Residential pupils are empowered to make a positive contribution towards their school life. This level of positive engagement enables pupils to develop self-esteem and gain increased confidence. This in turn helps them overcome barriers that have previously hindered their learning and attainment. Pupils are afforded excellent opportunities to build social networks, including being involved in external social groups such as local drama clubs.

Staff promote consistent aspirations for the residential pupils. They are fully committed to ensuring that each young person has the best opportunities and can achieve their full potential. This results in young people wanting to achieve and consequently they make exceptional progress within education.

The placement planning for young people is exceptional. Plans detail a clear picture of residential pupils' needs and what steps are being taken to address their needs consistently and appropriately, including contact with family and friends. Access to external support agencies ensures that young people are receiving the right level of individual care in a supportive and caring environment.

Residential pupils' placement plans are regularly reviewed to ensure that the school is consistently meeting their individual needs. Any changes are discussed with the individual, inviting honest feedback about the support they receive. A staff member said, 'It is great here; we all want what is best for the young people.' The school has effective systems for the safe handling and storage of medicines. Residential pupils

have health care plans which details their health needs and the action required to meet those needs. Staff actively encourage residential pupils to enjoy and participate in healthy activities and experiences. This demonstrates a commitment to providing residential pupils with positive, healthy and stimulating experiences, while adopting an organised and safe approach.

The accommodation for resident groups is domestic in style, very comfortable and maintained to a high standard. Catering is very well managed to enable residential pupils who are working towards transition to budget for and prepare their own meals on a regular basis. Meal times are sociable events and make good use of the well equipped kitchen/diners within each residential unit. Older residential pupils have access to domestic washing machines within their living areas which further promote the acquisition of life skills. Residential pupils show real pride in their warm and relaxed accommodation and are keen to show visitors around.

## **Residential pupils' safety**

The school makes outstanding provision to safeguard residential pupils' welfare. The welfare of residential pupils is actively promoted and safeguarded. They are appropriately supervised by vigilant staff and are free from bullying. The school takes appropriate and decisive action to safeguard residential pupils and works effectively with the relevant external agencies. Staff fully understand their role and responsibilities to promote and safeguard young people's welfare. They are familiar with the school's safeguarding policies and are suitably trained in child protection relevant to the complex needs of the residential pupils at the school. They provide an excellent level of supervision for residential pupils based on their age, understanding and ability, to make sure they are safe in school and in the community. They give residential pupils excellent advice and support about personal safety.

The school has a clear procedure and guidance that helps to ensure that all staff and visitors are familiar with the requirements for safeguarding children. Every member of the care staff is trained in child protection, first aid and the management of medicines. There is a robust system in place for the safe recruitment of staff which assesses their suitability to work with children.

Staff are extremely aware of residential pupils' vulnerability and the risks they face in the community. They work hard to ensure that risks to residential pupils are effectively managed. There are detailed individual risk assessments and plans for what staff should do should a residential pupil go missing. The school has a copy of the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocol and procedure, but is yet to ensure that their own policy is compatible and updated to reflect this. However, this does not affect the outcomes for, or safety of, the residential pupils.

Residential pupils have very clear plans identifying what may cause any difficult behaviour. These plans outline strategies to manage these behaviours in a calm and effective manner. Individual's behaviour is discussed by the staff team who seek

advice from parents, teaching staff and support agencies. They share information about what works in certain situations with young people to ensure consistency. The behaviour plans are reviewed regularly to make sure they are up-to-date and continue to meet residential pupils' needs.

Staff support residential pupils when they are upset. They offer reassurance, are compassionate and help them to try and deal with their anxieties in a positive way. Staff use various skills to encourage residential pupils to develop socially acceptable behaviour. They place great emphasis on building positive relationships with residential pupils and understanding their behaviour.

Residential pupils are protected by a comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. Staff conduct regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure the premises are safe and secure.

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

The management and organisation of the residential provision is outstanding. The school is professionally and efficiently run by effective senior managers. They promote a clear vision and values that provide a safe and stable environment for the pupils residing at the school. The school is committed to sustained improvement in the quality of care it provides.

Strong and thorough systems are in place to review the quality of care, identify areas for improvement and take action to ensure that the school meets residential pupils' needs and promotes their welfare. This involves an independent visitor who visits the school regularly on behalf of the organisation to check records, assess the physical condition of the buildings and talk to residential pupils about their experiences.

The school provides education and accommodation for young people with a wide range of complex behavioural, learning, emotional and social needs. Staff recognise residential pupils as individuals with different needs, backgrounds, interests and views. They ensure that residential pupils receive an individualised service designed to meet their personal needs. Staff have an excellent knowledge of the residential pupils they are working with, ensuring their needs are consistently met. The school values the rights of individuals to respect and dignity and has created an environment where people's differences are accepted.

The care staff deploy their responsibilities in a manner that treats residential pupils with upmost dignity, respect and sensitivity. The process for dealing with complaints is fair and transparent. The partnership between parents and carers is reflected in the achievements residential pupils make. Parents value highly the school's residential provision and know their child is happy, well-cared for and is making remarkable progress. Parents describe the school as 'a wonderful, wonderful school with wonderful, wonderful carers and teaching staff'.



Management of this school is enthusiastic, ensuring others are equally inspired to make a difference. This level of commitment means little goes unnoticed. This typifies the school's positive approach towards ensuring every child matters. The involvement and participation of residential pupils is totally inclusive of everyday practice and means they can make informed choices and feel valued by those that care for and teach them.

All care staff receive ongoing training to ensure they hold all required skills and knowledge necessary to meet residential pupils' diverse needs. Regular supervision and team meetings take place, providing care staff with opportunities to discuss their practice and review their performance. This level of support ensures staff provide high quality care and that residential pupils' well-being remains their focus.

Staff are child focused. Residential pupils are provided with excellent continuity of care from people they truly trust and respect. All required policies and procedures are in place and known by those required to implement them. Required records are completed and stored securely.

All recommendations from the previous inspection have been met. A new system has been introduced with regards to homely remedies given to young people. Sanctions are now recorded in a bound and numbered book and are regularly monitored by the head of care. The head of care has recently completed an additional qualification.

## **National minimum standards**

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

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

- Provide residential pupils with contact details of the Children's Rights Director.
- Ensure the school's procedures are compatible with the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols and procedures applicable to the area where the school is located.

**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.**



29/02/2012

Dear Residential Pupils

### **Inspection of Pontville 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 and helped me to make judgements 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 units. Thank you for allowing me to have a meal with you. It was delicious. It was great to hear that you are taking part in activities that are important to you such as cadets, jogging, going to the gym and playing on the computer.

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 when you need it. You enjoy a wide range of healthy meals and snacks. It was great to hear about the fun you had doing 'come dine with me'.

It was lovely 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 working very hard in preparing for moving on in the future in the independence 'leg'.

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,

Sonya Robinson