

Windlestone School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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Inspector	Leonard Hird

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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

Windlestone School is a residential special school for 72 children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school opened in 2006 and provides 20 residential places on weekdays for boys and girls, aged from 11 to 16 years old. Accommodation comprises of a purpose-built residential block with two ten-bedded mixed gender units. Most bedrooms are single-bedded and all bedrooms have en suite showers and toilets. Residential pupils have access to the extended day facilities provided at the school until 7.30pm each weekday. The school is situated in a semi-rural environment in Chilton, County Durham. The residential provision was last inspected in November 2010.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for residential pupils	good
Quality of residential provision and care	good
Residential pupils' safety	outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	good

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- All of the national minimum standards are met, with no weaknesses identified which have any direct impact on outcomes for residential pupils.
- All previous recommendations made at the last full inspection have been fully addressed.
- Residential pupils enjoy staying at the school and feel safe due to the comprehensive and effective safeguarding procedures in operation at the school. Residential pupils' welfare is further enhanced by the use of comprehensive health and safety risk assessments in their day-to-day life.
- The school has effective anti-bullying measures in place and any incident is quickly and effectively addressed. The behaviour of residential pupils is very good.
- There is much strength in the quality of support and care for residential pupils. All of the residential staff team clearly demonstrate that the well being of the pupils is paramount.
- The residential experience is enabling residential pupils to make good progress in their educational and social development. This experience is further helping residential pupils to develop their independence, forge new friendships and enhance their citizenship.
- Residential pupils are provided with a balanced and varied diet. Food is of a good standard and everything is well prepared by an experienced catering team.
- There is one area identified for improvement in the leadership and management of the residential provision. This relates to the residential team leaders having not

yet completed a dedicated management course that would enable them to provide extra managerial support for the residential staff team.

- Parents and residential pupils spoke positively of the support they receive from the school and members of the residential staff team.

Outcomes for residential pupils

The outcomes for residential pupils are good. The school's comprehensive 24-hour curriculum is fully promoted by the residential staff team. This understanding of the school's ethos and curriculum by the residential staff team is helping them to address the often complex needs of residential pupils. There are many and varied opportunities for residential pupils to take part in a well-planned nightly activities programme. Activities range from visiting local sports centres, to the preparation for independent living or support in undertaking homework. A residential pupil said, 'the school and residential staff have really helped me improve my understanding of art and music'. The involvement of residential pupils by staff in these activities is helping to enhance their personal understanding and development.

Members of staff work closely with residential pupils to ensure that their identified care needs are met in a friendly but professional manner. Residential pupils and their families are well supported by members of staff when attending statutory residential review meetings. A parent said, 'the school understands the needs of my child and I can rely on their support'. All of the residential pupils spoken with confirm that living in residence provided them with good outcomes.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the residential provision is good. The needs of residential pupils are comprehensively addressed by the school's well-managed 24-hour curriculum. Residential pupils are actively encouraged to develop their own identity and personalities by the promotion of choice, in areas, such as contemporary music, sport and youth culture. The implementation of the 24 hour curriculum by the residential staff team ensures that the choice of activities and services offered by the school is tailored to meet the individual needs of residential pupils.

The health care needs of individual residential pupils are identified as part of the general admission process. This information is recorded in a clear and accessible plan for each residential pupil that details how their health care is to be addressed. Clear procedures are followed for the management, secure storage and administration of medication and appropriate records are maintained. Parents confirm that the school insists on parental permissions being in place for the administration of medication and emergency health treatment. All of the residential staff team are first aid trained and residential staff who administer medication have also undertaken medication training. Arrangements are in place to look after residential pupils if they are unwell

and until their parents come to collect them. Residential pupils and their parents confirm they are very happy with the levels of health care provided at the school.

Residential pupils have a good choice of healthy and nutritious meals. All of the main meals are prepared by a qualified and experienced catering staff. Menus are varied and take full account of the school's healthy eating ethos. The cook ensures that alternatives are available for those residential pupils who have specialist dietary requirements. Additionally, fresh fruit is always available both in the dining hall and the residence. Members of the residential staff team who prepare meals have the appropriate qualifications for the safe handling of food. Residential pupils are very positive about the quality and quantity of food served at the school.

There are a variety of ways for residential pupils to effectively contribute their views and express their opinions on how the residence and the school are managed. Members of staff are highly supportive of residential pupils and encourage them to fully voice their opinions, thoughts and views. The school has a culture of listening to residential pupils. There is a clear complaints and recording system in place. Residential pupils confirm they know how to make a formal complaint, if necessary. Regular residence meetings take place and residential pupils meet regularly with their key worker on a one-to-one basis. However, there is a need for other members of staff to be more involved in this work. Residential pupils feel their views are taken seriously and that they are involved in the decision-making process.

Residential pupils' safety

The senior management team has adopted a whole school approach towards keeping residential and day pupils safe. There is a strong commitment made by the school to ensure that all aspects of its health and safety policies and procedures are current and easily accessible to staff. Maintenance issues are quickly identified and expediently dealt with, to ensure, residential pupils live in a safe environment. The risk assessments undertaken by the school's designated health and safety officer are excellent and ensure the safety of residential pupils.

Residential pupils are protected through the school's robust approach to addressing all forms of bullying behaviour including those of cyber or text bullying. The school's anti-bullying policy and procedure is followed in practice. Residential pupils are aware of how to contact external and independent youth organisations for support such as, Childline, if they feel they are being bullied. Residential pupils confirm that they are aware of the school's zero tolerance policy towards bullying and that members of staff quickly address any incidents of bullying that may occur. Members of staff and residential pupils have a deep seated understanding of how they should address incidents of bullying if they occur.

All staff regularly undertake training in behavioural management which includes training in de-escalation and physical intervention techniques. A clear and detailed policy and procedure on behaviour and discipline is in place for staff and this is

followed in practice. Incentive and reward schemes are in place for good behaviour or for excellent work. Some of the most successful reward and incentive schemes have been developed by the residential pupils themselves including a scheme based on the 5 Olympic rings. Residential pupils are aware of both the rewards and sanction schemes and feel they are fair.

There is a detailed policy, procedure and protocol on the actions to be taken when residential pupils are absent without authority and this is followed by the staff. Residential pupils are benefiting from very positive and supportive working relationships that are occurring at the school.

Appropriately qualified personnel regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and equipment for the prevention, detection and extinguishing of fires. Residential pupils undertake fire drills at appropriate time intervals and these are recorded.

The welfare of residential pupils is further protected by the school's comprehensive recruitment process. The school follows a clear policy on recruitment in line with the Department for Education guidance. A detailed record of the employment process showing that Criminal Records Bureau check, references and verbal reference checks are also made. The formal interview process is maintained on each staff member's file. This vetting process ensures that only suitably qualified personnel work with residential pupils.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The management and leadership of the residential provision are good. The head of care is well qualified and experienced as are all of the residential staff team. The residential staff team are demonstrating a strong commitment to ensuring residential pupils succeed throughout the school's comprehensive 24-hour curriculum. There are excellent working relationships occurring between the residential and educational staff teams. This close level of cooperation between the teams is helping residential pupils with complex and diverse needs to succeed.

The long serving and experienced residential staff team are providing good levels of support, guidance and care for residential pupils. All of the residential staff team have the appropriate qualifications for working with residential pupils. However, the team leaders have yet to undertake a dedicated management course which would enable them to provide better managerial support for the residential staff team. Residential staff confirm that they are well supported by the management team and have opportunities to undertake further training when necessary. Parents indicate that the staff team is very supportive and extremely helpful. One parent commented that the residential staff team have given both them and their child a wonderful support service over a number of years.

There are a number of different and influential forums available to residential pupils

to enable them to put their views forward both in school and the residence. Residential pupils indicate that they can speak to any member of staff if they need to and that they can contact external support agencies such as ChildLine. All of the residential pupils can access a clear and easily understood complaints procedure. If complaints are made by residential pupils they are documented, investigated and acted upon with the outcomes of the investigation being shared with the complainant.

Regular recorded monitoring of care practice is undertaken by the head of care and the local authority's visiting officer, whose visits are unannounced. The information gathered from these visits is shared appropriately with the headteacher, residential staff, the local authority and governing body. Where issues are identified through this monitoring process they are quickly addressed. The school's and the local authority's monitoring programmes help ensure that residential pupils are receiving good levels of support, guidance and care.

Parents confirm that the residential staff keep them fully up to date on the progress of their child. This strong working relationship helps to ensure that the interests of the residential pupil are always paramount.

National minimum standards

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

What should the school do to improve further?

- Consider providing dedicated management training to team leaders.

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.



11/01/2012

Dear residential pupils,

Inspection of Windlestone School

Thank you for making us welcome during our recent visit to your school. We were able to meet and talk with many of you about different aspects of your life at the school. We enjoyed our visit to the school and we are writing to let you know the outcomes of the inspection.

You have very positive working relationships with the residential staff team. They involve you wherever possible in making the decisions that affect your life. All of the staff are ensuring that you live in a very safe environment and that there is always lots of support available to enable you to lead both a safe and healthy lifestyle.

All of the staff employed by the school are properly recruited and receive good levels training to ensure they have the skills and qualifications to enable them to look after you. However, the residential team leaders need to undertake further training to develop their management skills.

Health and safety issues are taken very seriously by the all of the staff at the school. There are excellent risk assessments and guidance in place to keep you safe both in the school, the residence and when you undertake school visits. There is a good choice of well prepared and cooked food available to you both in the dining hall and the residence on a night-time.

You commented that you work well with a friendly and professional staff and like living at the school. You especially enjoy taking part in the many different evening activities arranged by the residential staff team.

Taking into account your views, as well as those of your parents and what we found, we have judged the school's overall effectiveness to be good.

Yours sincerely,

Leonard Hird

Yours sincerely,

Leonard Hird