

Rowdeford School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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Inspector Jennifer Reed

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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

Rowdeford School is a local authority, secondary, co-educational, special school for pupils aged between 11 and 16 years with complex learning disabilities. The school provides places for a maximum of 130 pupils. All pupils admitted to the school are subject to a Statement of Special Educational Needs and Disability under the 1996 Education Act. The school is situated in a village located near to the town of Devizes in Wiltshire.

The school provides weekly residential provision for up to 23 boys and girls during the school terms. The residential provision, provided within the main school building, comprises of three separate units that accommodate junior boys, senior boys and girls. Referrals for admission to boarding may come from external agencies, the school, parents, carers, or pupils. Placements are made at the school's discretion in consultation with the local authority. All admissions are subject to both pupil and parental agreement.

The residential provision was last inspected on 20 January 2012.

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

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- Leadership and management of the residential provision is strong. The residential provision is efficiently run, with clear lines of delegated accountabilities and responsibilities within a well-integrated school management structure.
- The school is committed to continual improvement. Ongoing evaluation processes measure the effectiveness of the residential provision and improve outcomes for residential pupils.
- Residential pupils receive an outstanding standard of individualised care from a well-qualified and experienced staff team. Residential pupils are making good developmental progress as they grow into adulthood. They learn how to become more independent and their confidence and self-esteem increases.
- Residential pupils are kept safe by the school's robust safeguarding arrangements. Staff demonstrate a sound understanding of child protection matters and they know how to report any welfare concern. A focus on pupils' well-being and safety underpins residential care practice. Pupils benefit from learning to develop an understanding of their own safety and well-being.
- Residential pupils are happy. They enjoy participating in boarding life and taking part in a wide range of evening activities that support their personal and academic development.
- The inclusive ethos of the residential provision supports each individual pupil, helps them to respect others and increases their abilities to form and sustain positive relationships.
- Excellent healthcare arrangements promote residential pupils physical, mental

and emotional health.

- Collaborative planning and liaison ensures that pupils and their parents or carers are fully included in decision-making. This improves outcomes for individual pupils.
- The school has met the one recommendation made for improvement made at the previous inspection in regard to the storage and guidance arrangements for asthma inhalers. The school's rolling development programme has improved the decoration and furnishings within the residential accommodation. Further training has benefited the performance of individual staff and the residential staff team.
- The school has not met one national minimum standard at this inspection in relation to the effectiveness of the monitoring of residential care practices. Three points for improvement are also made to further raise standards of care and improve outcomes for residential pupils.
- One parent summarised parental views by saying, 'Rowdeford School is a centre of excellence in beautiful surroundings with superb staff. My child is so happy there.'

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding.

Young people staying in the residential have complex learning disabilities and associated disorders. Their individually structured residential experience is tailor-made to meet their assessed needs and supports their personal and social development. A parent said, 'my child has benefited hugely. They learned so much from boarding.'

Staff ensure that the support given to each young person reflects parental wishes and includes already established positive routines and care practices. This highly integrated approach promotes the welfare of young people, provides them with stability and gives coherence in their lives. At the appropriate time, residential pupils are helped to return to live home, or are helped to prepare for moving on to further education.

Residential pupils have opportunities to make and sustain positive relationships and friendships. The inclusive ethos of the school is also strongly embedded within the daily life and routines of the residential units. This helps young people to respect difference and show tolerance and patience with each other. They also begin to understand their sexuality and to recognise what constitutes socially acceptable behaviour. As a result of their knowledge and self-awareness, they make and enjoy appropriate relationships with their peers and participate appropriately in supervised social activities.

Young people enjoy living in the residential provision and taking part in a wide range of stimulating activities. They are able to develop their interests and abilities and to practice and master new skills. They take a pride in their achievements and enjoy the praise they receive and the celebration of their progress. This helps residential pupils to grow in confidence and be willing to keep trying out new things to achieve their full potential. Most young people make good progress in becoming more independent and this prepares them to move successfully towards adulthood.

The school's 'buddy' scheme enables young people to take some responsibility in supporting new pupils to settle into the residential units. Pupils enjoy contributing to the running of the residential provision and this leadership opportunity increases their self-esteem.

Parents summarised outcomes for their children by saying, 'my child has matured enormously since boarding. Their independent skills, personal self-esteem and self-respect are qualities I have enjoyed seeing progress;' and, 'staff have been so supportive and positive. My child has had opportunities to learn social and independence skills that I could not have provided at home.'

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of care provided to residential pupils is outstanding.

The school carefully considers the suitability of any new admission to the residential units to make certain that young people benefit from their residential experience. The well structured induction programme is sensitively delivered. It takes into account the specific needs and wishes of each pupil and their family while progressing at the young person's pace. Residential staff work in partnership with parents throughout their child's stay, involving them fully in any decision-making about their child's daily life. This excellent level of communication enables the school to provide residential pupils with consistent and appropriate individualised care that supports them to fulfil their potential.

Residential and academic staff also work closely together. This holistic approach meets each child's unique needs. For example, in residential time, the staff listen to pupils read and help them with their spellings. Staff offer residential pupils a good range of stimulating activities that include both learning and social development opportunities. Pupils really enjoy their leisure time, a good proportion of which is spent taking part in activities within the local community.

The quality of relationships between the pupils and staff in the residential units is excellent. The well-established and qualified residential staff team are both knowledgeable and experienced in looking after young people with diverse needs. Staff deliver innovative and effective care to support and progress each residential pupil in their development. The trust and high regard that pupils have for their staff team underpins their willingness to take their first steps into new areas of their lives.

This helps them to master new independent living and personal skills and to become more independent.

Comprehensive behaviour strategies and care plans guide staff in looking after residential pupils well. Young people and their parents or carers are fully involved in drawing up care plans that are written clearly and are understood by the pupils. Key workers regularly discuss and review care plans with pupils to help them consider their progress and to encourage them to take responsibility for managing areas of their lives. Staff work individually with residential pupils to increase their understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and safe and to raise their awareness of danger, for example, the risk of fire.

Residential pupils' health needs are exceptionally well met. The school has links with local agencies and through these pupils have access to a range of health services and professionals. The school's procedures for the administration of medication are robust and medicines are safely stored. Staff receive training as a result of which they know how to effectively meet young people's specific medical needs. The school does not provide facilities for sick pupils and residential pupils return home when they are unwell.

Catering arrangements within the school provide pupils with a balanced and nutritious diet. Staff know about individual pupil's food preferences and menus are planned to ensure that there is always a meal available that each young person will enjoy. Breakfast, tea and supper are taken within each residential unit and these arrangements contribute to the provision of a homely environment.

The residential provision is organised by age and gender and this contributes to pupils well-being and safety. The school provides three separate residential units to accommodate junior boys, senior boys and girls. Each unit benefits from the school's rolling programme of redecoration and refurbishment, to provide pupils with comfortable and relaxing accommodation. Pupils are able to decorate their bedrooms with posters and bring some personal possessions with them. Cleaning and hygiene standards within the accommodation are high.

Parents and young people are very satisfied with the standard of residential provision. A parent said, 'I am extremely impressed with the quality of the boarding unit.' On leaving the school, a young person wrote a card to staff saying, 'Thank you for all the help you have given me over the last five years; you are the best!'

Residential pupils' safety

The quality of the school's arrangements for keeping residential pupils safe and protected from harm is good.

Staff regularly talk with residential pupils about how to keep themselves safe in different situations. Staff advise, direct and guide young people to help them

understand how to deal with any known risk of harm. For example, residential pupils regularly take part in fire drills and they know how to safely evacuate the building.

Care plans and positive behaviour management strategies are effectively implemented and keep pupils safe from harm. Staff receive regular training in de-escalation techniques and they employ these methods to efficiently and effectively manage any challenging behavioural issues. Pupils' behaviour within the residential provision is generally very good. Very few sanctions are given to pupils and no restraints have been undertaken since the last inspection. Staff make a record of any disciplinary measure undertaken and the senior management review and monitor records to make sure pupils are safeguarded. However, one recording error was not identified. Although not the case, this oversight may have had a detrimental impact.

The school has a zero tolerance of bullying. Residential pupils report that bullying does not happen very often and that appropriate action is taken by staff to deal with incidents. Residential pupils are kept safe by the high level of supervision they receive from residential staff. No residential pupils have gone missing and staff are vigilant about promoting young people's welfare during residential time. Their vigilance mostly enables pupils to safely take age-appropriate risks as part of their development. However, the use of bicycles, tricycles and go-carts has not been robustly risk-assessed or adequate precautions taken, such as the use of helmets to stop them from hurting their heads. This activity has been suspended while the school takes the necessary safeguards.

The school takes appropriate measures to check any visitor coming onto the school site and the secure access to the residential units contributes to the protection of residential pupils. Action is taken to address new risks as they arise, such as use of the bins. Recruitment and selection processes are robust and assess the suitability of adults to work with young people.

The school carries out regular health and safety and utilities checks to ensure the premises provide a safe environment for residential pupils and staff. However, some hazards, such as unrestricted upper floor windows and the stairway, have not been identified. Action was taken to address these during the inspection. Furthermore, despite having been reported, some maintenance issues remain outstanding, for instance the broken sash cords on some windows.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The leadership and management of the residential provision is good.

The residential provision is efficiently run. There are clear lines of delegated accountability and responsibility within a well-defined school management structure. The school is committed to continual improvement. Ongoing evaluation processes measure the effectiveness of the residential provision and improve outcomes for residential pupils. The school has satisfactorily met the one recommendation for

improvement made at the previous inspection.

The inclusive ethos of the school promotes diversity and equality of opportunity for all pupils and is well considered within care planning for residential pupils. Communication and contact with families and agencies is excellent, ensuring that residential pupils are well supported. The views of pupils and families contribute to the development of residential care practices.

Staff have high aspirations for all pupils. The experienced, qualified and very committed staff team is well-established. A consistent standard of care is delivered as a result of the coherence and stability provided by the residential staff team. This is appreciated by both pupils and their families. Staff receive regular training and their practice benefits from robust supervision and appraisal processes and strong senior management support.

Records are well kept, with key information being clearly written to help pupils understand the content. Senior managers and the independent visitor regularly monitor the residential provision's records and care practices. There have been no complaints received. However, monitoring processes have not effectively identified shortfalls in practice. The independent visitor does not report on all required issues and recent reports do not offer any recommendations to drive forward improvement.

National minimum standards

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.

- Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include: checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of physical interventions, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children; assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish). (NMS 20.2)

What should the school do to improve further?

- ensure that windows can be safely kept open to provide adequate ventilation and are appropriately restricted on first and second floor windows to keep children safe
- ensure arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils in the school; in particular complete a risk assessment for children riding bicycles, tricycles and go-carts
- ensure the records specified in Appendix 2 are effectively monitored by the school and action is taken as appropriate.

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.



02/07/2012

Hello to everyone who stays in Salisbury, Avebury and Malmesbury units.

Inspection of Rowdeford School

I expect you will remember that I came to inspect your school at the beginning of July.

I could see that you are all very happy and that you enjoy staying at the school during the week. You told me that you have a lot of fun doing all sorts of activities.

I saw that you really liked riding the bikes, trikes, scooters and go-carts. As some of you go very fast, I have asked the school to make sure that you are safe while you are riding. The school are buying some more helmets so that if you fall off, you should not hurt your heads.

The staff look after you very well and they make sure that you feel safe and comfortable living in your units. You have made a good job of decorating your bedrooms with posters and pictures. Some of the windows in the building don't open properly and I have asked the school to make sure that they can open safely.

The staff help you to learn new things which helps you to become more independent. I saw some pupils doing a very good job washing up after tea.

Staff also help you think about other people and you are learning to understand how your behaviour makes other people feel. I think that mostly your behaviour is very good. Staff talk to you about what has happened when things go a bit wrong and they don't give many sanctions.

Staff help to you to keep healthy and help you with your spellings and reading.

I could see that you are each making very good progress. I judged that Rowdeford School is a good school where pupils are looked after exceptionally well.

I have asked Tina, Mrs Lancaster-Gaye and the governors to keep looking closely at what goes on in the residential units to make sure everything is done properly.

Thank you very much for talking with me and letting me see what happens during your time in the residential units. It really helped me to find out about your school.

Yours sincerely,

Jennifer Reed