

Wishmore Cross Academy

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

Wishmore Cross Academy is a publicly funded independent state school and is part of the Academies Enterprise Trust. The academy is situated in Chobham, Surrey and draws pupils from a range of backgrounds, both urban and rural, across Surrey and also neighbouring LEAs.

The academy is a special school for young people all of whom have a statement identifying behavioural, emotional and social difficulties as their primary need. The academy can admit up to 60 boys between the ages of 11 to 16 and can offer up to 22 residential places (including extended days) on a flexible basis for up to 4 nights per week. Within the building there are three separate residential units where boarders have single or double bedrooms. The residential pupils have access to the academy grounds and facilities for evening activities.

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 at Wishmore Cross Academy is outstanding. The academy provides an exceptional boarding experience that significantly improves the quality of life for residential pupils and their families. Staff work exceptionally well with parents to successfully promote the personal growth and development of each pupils.
- Along with education and therapeutic input, the boarding experience greatly improves the personal and social development of pupils which in turn supports their families. Strategies used by staff to manage pupil's behaviour are implemented at home to positive effect.
- There is a strong commitment to the inclusion of pupils with special needs and disabilities into the community by offering a highly effective individual package of care and pastoral support to residential pupils.
- Pupils demonstrate pride in their school proudly wearing the new uniforms of the academy.
- There is strong leadership and the management is well supported by a highly qualified, experienced and stable staff team. Families and professionals highly value the way staff care and support pupils in all aspects of their welfare and development.
- The excellent accommodation is safe, secure and maintained in excellent decorative order. Residential pupils enjoy their freedom of movement within spacious surroundings, complemented by the privacy of their own personalised bedrooms.

- The self-evaluation of the service is particularly effective. This takes into account the changing needs of pupils and the residential provision. Close working is very successful with a wide range of professionals and families.
- All of the national minimum standards are met.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Pupils greatly benefit from their residential experience and have strong affiliation with it. They live in a warm, nurturing, supportive and relaxed environment where positive relationships enable them to feel secure and achieve best outcomes, and are consistent with their placement plans. They greatly benefit from having contact with peers in a social setting.

The pupils are proudly wearing new academy uniforms and say that the negative images of the old school is now replaced by a new positive image. Pupils benefit from the academy's commitments to the inclusion of pupils with special needs and disabilities into the community. This affords pupils a social and emotional dimension to their learning through extra-curricular activities and objectives which raise awareness of their responsibilities in the community they live in. Pupils join in cadets where they learn various social skills, such as working as a team and building confidence and leadership.

Pupils make outstanding progress socially by learning to overcome and manage difficulties. A parent stated that, 'I was pleased with the positive changes and improvement I can see and how much impact the improvement has made at home. My son can now communicate with his sister and shows empathy towards her. This has not happened before. We can now actually go out and spend quality times together which become enjoyable, instead of extremely stressful as it used to be. He is also continuing to improve his attitude and turn around his behaviour'.

The academy operates a positive culture of consultation. Residential pupils are encouraged to contribute to decision making regarding developments to the academy and residential provision. Pupils are regularly consulted through regular link working sessions, house meetings and their placement reviews. Pupils have access to an independent advocate. Pupils are also consulted through monthly monitoring visits by an independent visitor.

Residential pupils enjoy very healthy lifestyles. They are encouraged to eat healthily and take part in various leisure and sport activities in the school and in the residential provision. Pupils also visit various places of interest. Activities and outings are thoroughly researched and risk assessed. A well-established multi-disciplinary team of therapists address any emotional and psychological health issues through individual and group work. Having such a team of professionals on site ensures that residential pupils get timely and regular access to them.

Residential pupils also learn various independent living skills, such as looking after personal space, cooking and travel training. A number of pupils achieved GCSEs in core subjects, such as English, mathematics and science. Older pupils attend a local college for vocational skills in addition to work experience placements.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the residential provision is outstanding. Residential pupils benefit from an effective induction. The residential staff visit prospective boarders and their family members at their home environment and collate information about them and their family backgrounds, likes and dislikes and care needs as a whole in order to devise individualised placement plans. Boarders are shown a DVD about the facilities available at the academy and the residential unit. They are then gradually introduced to the residential unit. This process helps pupils to progress at a pace that is comfortable for them. As a result pupils settle well in the residential provision quickly. Two new pupils spoken to said that they are familiarised with the school rules, routines and facilities throughout the excellent induction programme and information in the parent and pupil handbooks.

The academy offers an individual package of education, care and pastoral support to pupils who may have negative experiences of school. They are supported by the school's commitment to life-long learning. It addresses negative attitudes, lack of service or ready access to them and other harmful social, economic and cultural barriers. All key staff contribute to these, including the link worker and the senior residential child care officer, in consultation with the pupils. Within the residential unit a pupil's routine, significant events and other information is recorded on a daily basis for all pupils accessing the service. This ensures that there is excellent communication between a pupil, their parents or carers at home, their school and the residential unit. The achievements are celebrated through the headteacher's weekly, termly and annual awards, such as, for the best attendance at school.

Residential staff very much values each pupil as an individual and demonstrate holistic knowledge of their character and needs. A link working system is operated and contributes to the effective co-ordination of information and attendance of individual pupils at meetings and reviews.

Residential accommodation is very spacious, clean, pleasantly decorated and provides a welcoming environment. Each time a pupil comes to stay in the unit they are given the same room so they can feel as though it is their space. As a result they have opportunities to personalise their bedrooms. Two recently developed games rooms provide opportunity to take part in various indoor activities and relax. Premises and outside areas are regularly checked and maintenance matters are promptly attended to.

Residential provision offers an excellent variety of extra-curricular activities for

individuals, as a group and in the community. The pupils of the academy are sponsoring four children in the most impoverished communities in Asia, Africa and South America with the help of a charity, to make a real difference to their lives.

Residential pupils live in an environment where their physical, emotional and healthcare needs are very well met. An effective arrangement is in place for residential pupils to access the school's local surgery. Designated health professionals visit the academy on a regular basis providing residential pupils and staff with advice and guidance. Residential pupils feel well cared for if unwell with suitable facilities and effective procedures being in place. Appropriate practices and arrangements are well established for the safe storage, receipt and administration of medication. The academy actively promotes healthy eating. Residential pupils are provided with a nutritious, varied and balanced diet. The religious, cultural and special diets of residential pupils are also well catered for.

Residential pupils' safety

The arrangements for residential pupils' are outstanding. The uppermost importance is given to the safety and well-being of pupils, staff and visitors. The academy and residential staff are proactive in keeping pupils safe in the residential unit, the school and in the community. The deputy headteacher is the designated child protection officer who oversees child protection concerns and supports staff in promoting positive behavioural of the pupils.

All staff, including administrative and ancillary staff are given child protection training and they are always vigilant about adhering to the safety procedures and minimising or eliminating the risks to pupils. The academy works effectively with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and seeks advice and guidance on safeguarding issues. Comprehensive child protection policies and procedures and robust risk assessments are devised for each residential pupil; these protect them from harm and ensure they are safe and secure when at the residential unit and during their visits to the community.

Staff have very good knowledge and skills to deal with bullying if this is suspected. Pupils know that bullying is not acceptable and they are supported to understand how some behaviour can make others feel. The role of the dignity champions will enhance this area of work.

Thorough vetting procedures safeguard pupils from having contact with unsuitable people. The academy follows Department of Education guidance on safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education.

Proactive behaviour management strategies are consistently applied to promote residential pupils' positive behaviour and relationships. The academy's policy on working with challenging behaviour, physical intervention and use of sanctions is focused on de-escalating incidents and is consistently and successfully implemented

in practice. Residential staff always communicate effectively with the school staff and also provide significant information electronically about the residential pupils' evening and night experiences at the residential unit. Thus all staff become aware of significant events for an individual, such as behavioural issues, and strategies are put in place to deal with this effectively. As a result there were no complaints or any child protection enquiries since the last inspection.

It is very unlikely that a pupil will go missing from the residential unit. Staff make them aware of the danger of being missing from the school and they do understand the consequence of this. As a result there were no missing from care incidents since the last inspection.

Pupils live in a physically safe environment. The academy complies with Department for Education health and safety advice and fire regulations. Written risk assessments are in place for school premises and residential premises. The headteacher, a deputy headteacher and the site manager reside in the academy grounds and walking night staff are on duty in the residential unit to ensure the welfare and safety of pupils.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

This is a very well managed residential provision conducted with the best interests of pupils at the centre of everything it does. The residential provision is in a collaborative arrangement with the academy and both are managed by a highly motivated and experienced headteacher. The senior leadership team consists of the headteacher, a deputy headteacher and senior residential child care officers who are committed to providing a continuously developing service and are innovative in finding ways to improve the service. This enables the academy to establish a closer tie between the educational and residential provisions in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for residential pupils.

There are effective systems in place to monitor the quality of the residential provision and for measuring the outcomes for pupils. The performance of staff is monitored by a deputy headteacher and the headteacher offers professional supervision to three senior residential staff in order to influence improving staff practice in order to deliver an excellent service to residential pupils. An independent monitoring visit takes place at least once in every term and the deputy headteacher monitors and signs the residential provision's records and takes appropriate steps on issues requiring actions.

Residential staff are well experienced, skilled and qualified to deliver the care and supervision the pupils need. They all receive regular supervision and annual performance reviews from their line manager. This ensures that they are monitored in their work and supported to identify any areas for development. There is an individual developmental plan for each member of residential staff. They regularly attend various in-house and external training to achieve this.

There is an excellent system in place for residential staff to communicate with parents and other agencies and the outcomes of these contacts are recoded. Pupils' views and wishes are valued and they have strong relationships with the staff. This enables them to speak to member of staff on duty and their concerns are listened to.

All required policies are in place and are implemented fully and effectively. All residential pupils have individual case files and these provide comprehensive information about their history and progress at the academy and are kept securely. Upon leaving the residential provision, pupils are presented with photographs, memories and achievements from their stay as a boarder.

The academy values individuals and celebrates difference. It enables pupils to explore through music, food, sport and festivals an understanding of equality and diversity. Discussions and display boards raise awareness of issues such as disability, racism, sexism and homophobia.

The only recommendation from the previous inspection is fully met.

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.



24/09/2012

Yours sincerely, Muhammad H. Rashid

Inspection of Wishmore Cross Academy

Dear residential pupils,

As you know, Ofsted recently inspected where you stay at your school. Thank you all for making me so welcome and telling me what you think about living at school. I spoke to some of you and your comments were very helpful to me. Your boarding provision was judged as outstanding in this inspection.

The residential care staff work very closely with teaching staff and therapist in order to provide you with an excellent level of care. You have individual care plans and allocated link workers who support you to meet your needs. Residential staff listen to your concerns and support you when there are difficulties.

Staff encourage and support you with various in-house and outside activities; so that you enjoy your stay and have good opportunities to develop interests. The staff support you very well to develop and learn more independent living skills. Staff also help you by encouraging good behaviour, they reward you for getting things right.

Staff help you to think of others; for example, by your supporting four children in Asia, Africa and South America, and taking part in community activities.

The school ensures that you live in a safe and comfortable environment. You said you are very happy living at the school and have opportunities to personalise your bedrooms.

You told me that you feel proud of wearing new uniforms of the school and it also gives a new positive image of your school.

Yours sincerely,

Muhammed Harunur Rashid