

Woolton High School

Woolton Hill Road, LIVERPOOL, L25 6JA

Inspection dates	11/02/2013 to 13/02/2013
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Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- Safeguarding is given the highest priority. The whole school approach to safeguarding is inspirational; therefore young people are safe and feel safe.
- Residential pupils thrive in a warm, caring, homely environment. They enjoy extremely positive relationships with staff, which are built upon mutual respect and trust. Consequently, the outcomes for them across all areas are outstanding.
- The residential provision is extremely well managed. The holistic approach to managing is effective and means the diverse needs of residential pupils are consistently met. Monitoring of the service is robust and helps maintain the high standards and drive forward further improvements.
- Residential pupils and their parents are very complimentary about school. They explain how they chose to be here and would not stay if they did not enjoy it. Parents comment upon the fantastic progress their children have made since attending the residential provision.
- The national minimum standards are met and are in many cases exceeded.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

Information about this inspection

The school was contacted on the morning of day one by the lead inspector to announce the inspection. The inspection took place over three days with feedback provided on the afternoon of day three. During the inspection records and documentation were examined and interviews took place with the residential pupils, head of care, head teacher, staff and safeguarding advisors. Evening activities were also observed over two nights.

Inspection team

Chris Scully

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Woolton High School is a local authority maintained residential special school for up to 50 male students in academic years 9-11, all of whom have a statement for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD.). The residential buildings provide 32 beds in total split between three houses. Two have a capacity of eight beds and a further 16 bed unit which is used solely by the Liverpool LA Short Breaks Service. The school residential service currently accesses only one of the eight bed units. Students have a choice of either boarding or extended days.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enhance the information available on the school website for parents and carers with regard to the residential care provision.
- The school has made good progress and now meets all the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Residential pupils are flourishing, because of the opportunities afforded to them when utilising the residential provision. They enjoy extremely positive relationships with staff which are built upon honesty, trust and mutual respect. These relationships have a profound effect on residential pupils as they feel valued, safe and protected which significantly increases their confidence and self-esteem. Residential pupils regularly engage in playful, appropriate banter with staff, for example, lively discussions as to who is the best snooker and pool player.

Residential pupils clearly enjoy spending time with staff. There is a strong sense of belonging and pupils have made firm friendships. Residential pupils have a secure understanding of the personalities of individual staff. They effectively utilise this information to approach specific staff for support, dependent upon their needs at that time. They are respectful of one another and offer support to others when needed, such as helping each other to develop their skills at pool. Young people are thriving in an environment which is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities which truly engage their interests.

They develop a sense of fair play and are very supportive of one another, for example, the high level of sportsmanship shown when playing on games consoles, and sports activities. Residential pupils are polite and courteous to staff, visitors and each other. They ensure visitors are not excluded and help to maintain their safety around school and on outings. The use of nicknames are used in a positive way towards staff and residential pupils. This enables residential pupils to establish what may be classed as appropriate terms of endearment which have a positive effect upon others.

Residential pupils are at the very heart of everything the school does. They feel valued and respected, because their views are actively sought, valued and are acted upon. Residential pupils feel empowered because they say staff listen to them and, where possible, act upon their requests, such as outings or requests to change to their overnight stays.

Residential pupils are very aware of the importance of being fit and healthy. They take responsibility for their own health by choosing healthier food options and smoking cessation. Residential pupils are confident to discuss healthier food options with staff, such as requesting baked potatoes as they feel this is better for them. Residential pupils are acutely aware of their own health care needs and will ask for additional support when needed from staff or other health care professionals.

The good health of residential pupils is further supported by staff understanding their needs and their commitment to working in partnership with other agencies, such as child and adolescent mental health teams. This means young people are more able to cope with their feelings and anxieties and are therefore more able to engage more fully with their education and social activities.

Residential pupils develop solid independence skills through the excellent opportunities available, which enable them to prepare for adulthood. These include life skills, such as cooking and shopping, along with taking part in external social activities to develop social skills and citizenship. Residential pupils develop confidence in their own abilities for example, asking to be shown how to iron their school uniform. Highly effective multi-agency partnerships significantly enhance residential pupils' smooth transition into adulthood. This is because they are able to develop the knowledge, skills, confidence and self-esteem to be better prepared for adulthood, the work environment and further education.

The quality of pastoral care and support is exceptional. Staff have an innate understanding of each residential pupil's individual and diverse needs. They appreciate that for some young people staying overnight from their families may be difficult. The provision of the extended day reduces the potential impact of this and means residential pupils can build up to overnight stays at their own pace. Each residential pupil's induction to the care provision is carefully tailored to their specific needs. This gradual process minimises any potential stress to young people and enables staff to devise effective support systems around the young person. Residential pupils are emphatic about enjoying their time here. They say they know they have had 'some bad times' but have had more 'great times' and that this was down to the staff and the support they provided. Residential pupils are keen to point out that they have chosen to attend residence.

The residential provision is an intrinsic part of the school. This means there are excellent communication and support systems in place across the school to support residential pupils. Consequently, all staff are quickly alerted to any issues which may impact upon residential pupils' engagement in either setting. Thus, staff are able to plan effectively to consistently meet the residential pupils' needs on a daily basis. The levels of care and support young people receive are exceptional. All staff are extremely committed to providing the best possible care and support to residential pupils. Staff have consistently high aspirations for residential pupils and work extremely hard to ensure young people achieve their full potential in relation to their starting points.

Care planning is extremely detailed and allows the uniqueness of each residential pupil to shine. The fusion of health, social and emotional needs is effectively captured, providing clear direction within the plans for improving outcomes. Residential pupils are actively encouraged to participate in the creation of the plans and the decisions being made about them. Consequently, residential pupils' voices are equally respected throughout all aspects of their care. The level of care planning is second to none and actively encourages and supports residential pupils' engagement with their education. This has resulted in an increase in school attendance for these pupils.

Residential pupils are empowered to make a positive contribution towards their school life. This level of positive engagement, such as attending homework clubs, enables young people to enhance their self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities. Consequently, they are able to overcome barriers that have previously hindered their learning and attainment. Residential pupils are provided with excellent opportunities to build social networks, including taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh awards scheme. This gives young people a real sense of community engagement. Residential pupils have excellent opportunities to remain in contact with those people who are important to them.

Young people's health needs are effectively supported. Residential pupils say, 'staff look after us when we are ill.' Highly effective, robust systems for the administration of medication mean residential pupils always receive their medication on time. Each residential pupil's health needs are remarkably well supported. This is because they have access to an extensive range of health care professionals for advice on topics such as sexual and mental health and smoking cessation. All of these services work cohesively with school which means residential pupils' needs are fully met.

The accommodation is of a very high standard and provides a warm, homely environment. School facilities are effectively utilised by residential pupils, such as the sports hall and gymnasium. It is very apparent that residential pupils are proud of the accommodation as they happily show visitors around. They are especially pleased that they are able to have goldfish as pets. They talk knowledgeably about how they care for them and ensure they are looked after during holiday periods.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

The safety and well-being of residential pupils is a main strength of the setting. This is because staff have an excellent understanding of the safeguarding procedures and are suitably trained in child protection. They are extremely aware of the diverse needs and behaviours of the residential pupils and how these may impact upon them. The school takes appropriate and decisive action to safeguard residential pupils and works in conjunction with external agencies. Throughout the school and house there are signs and details about safeguarding with contact details clearly visible. This enables staff, young people and visitors to have an excellent understanding about the roles of people involved in safeguarding in school and beyond. Staff say they are 'encouraged to develop and maintain practices that safeguard the children and each other.'

Young people are aware of who they can talk to, including independent people should they have any concerns. The local authority designated officer said, 'the school have excellent systems in place for dealing with safeguarding matters. They are open and transparent and there is an on-going culture of vigilance embraced by all school staff.'

There are robust systems in place for the safe recruitment of staff, which assess their suitability to work with young people. Visitors are monitored and effectively chaperoned at all times. Staff 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. Residential pupils are able to keep themselves safe as they are provided with excellent advice and support about personal safety. For example, discussing the potential dangers of using unsecured wireless internet systems and protecting their own information. Residential pupils do not go missing. However, clear procedures are in place which are understood by all staff should this occur.

Residential pupils are very aware of their own safety. They talk knowledgeably about the dangers of cyber-bullying and other forms of bullying. There are effective procedures in place to support young people should bullying occur. Residential pupils say they can talk to staff about this and know that they will help them to resolve any issues.

Positive behaviour is exceptionally well promoted and is a key strength of the provision. Residential pupils have a clear understanding of the school rules and expectations because they are consistently applied in both the residence and the school. They respond well to reward systems in particular the sticky notes which provide instant praise for their efforts. Staff use various skills to encourage residential pupils to develop socially acceptable behaviours, in particular asking open-ended questions. They place great emphasis on building positive relationships with residential pupils and encouraging them to take responsibility for their actions. This proactive approach means sanctions and physical interventions are rarely used.

Overall, young people are developing the skills and maturity which enables them to manage challenging or difficult situations in an appropriate manner. This is echoed by residential pupils who say that they do occasionally have disagreements with their peers but feel more able to resolve this, but know that staff are there to intervene if necessary.

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

Outstanding

The headteacher and head of care promote a culture that ensures residential pupils are always

listened to and respected as individuals. The head of care's profile within school is intrinsic to the management of the residential provision. This is because of the wealth of experience they bring to cross remit working, especially with regards to safeguarding.

The highly perceptive management by senior managers effectively promotes clear visions and values that provide a safe, stable, nurturing environment. Their commitment to providing high quality care to each residential pupil is commendable. This has a very positive effect upon young people and is evident from the excellent progress they are making across all areas of their development.

Care staff deploy their responsibilities in a manner that treats each residential pupil with the 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 say, staff have been 'a rock' to them and comment upon how their children are now, 'the hardworking, happy, better person, for having met them.'

Highly effective systems are firmly established to ensure nothing gets missed. Daily handovers between residential and teaching staff ensure a smooth transition of care is secured. The school's development plan encapsulates the school's vision for the residential provision. Robust and thorough systems to review the quality of care highlight what is working well and areas for development. School governors are highly committed to ensuring all young people receive the best possible care and education. They meet regularly with the headteacher and head of care to discuss the residential provision and are helping to drive forward future developments. They visit the residential units on a regular basis and compile a report. These are comprehensive and show time is taken to seek the views of residential pupils.

Staff have an excellent understanding of each young person's diverse needs; staff are child focused. Effective planning results in young people's needs being met exceptionally well in practice. This creates a culture where residential pupils' rights as individuals are respected and their differences are accepted. Staff receive regular supervision and have very good opportunities to attend additional training courses to gain new qualifications and skills such as a degree and an NVQ 4 in mental health. The deployment of staff is child-focused and provides young people excellent continuity of care from people they trust and respect. Staff work extremely well as a team. They say they are, 'experienced and established, but remain open to change and new methods of practice and foster a safe, secure and relaxed environment, which enables young people to reach their full potential.'

All required policies and procedures are in place and known by those required to implement them. Required records are completed and stored securely.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	104739
Social care unique reference number	SC040728
DfE registration number	341/7039

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.

Type of school	Maintained
Number of boarders on roll	
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	13 to 16
Headteacher	Mr M.E. Christian
Date of previous boarding inspection	29/02/2012
Telephone number	0151 233 8650
Email address	m.christian@wooltonhigh.liverpool.sch.uk

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