

Lonsdale School

Brittain Way, STEVENAGE, Hertfordshire, SG2 8UT

Inspection dates	12/02/2013 to 14/02/2013	
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

- Residential pupils continue to receive outstanding levels of care and support in an environment that meets their varied needs. Family members are extremely confident the health care needs of their child will be met and their child will be kept safe.
- The promotion of diversity ensures disability is not seen as a barrier to experiencing a full, enriching lifestyle. Residential pupils benefit enormously from continually developing support to achieve their full potential.
- Residential pupils enjoy living in a safe environment, where achievements are celebrated. Daily routines and working practices actively promote and guide all residential pupils towards a more independent lifestyle regardless of disability.
- Residential pupils live in an inclusive environment where their views are continually sought using excellent communication methods. These views are then constantly reflected in the routines adopted within residential provision.
- The organisation and leadership of the school is outstanding, with a particular strength the school's quest for continued improvement.
- Safeguarding arrangements are extremely robust and effective in keeping residential pupils safe. Safeguarding is paramount in the minds of all managers and staff. Excellent joint working with other professionals safeguard residential pupils at school and in the community.

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

Residential site above the school split into four flats. One concentrating on independence skills. Communal dining area. The site just opened and contractors provide meal and maintenance. School for 84 pupils residential 26 places. Normally each young person stays for two nights. They are split into two groups, one group attends Monday/Tuesday night the other group Wednesday/Thursday night. School opened this term January 2013 and residential closed for a while reopening the week of the inspection 12.2.13.

Inspection team

Gwen Buckley

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Lonsdale School is a local authority maintained residential special school for pupils who have a range of physical and neurological impairments. The school is funded for 84 places with up to 26 residential pupils at any one time aged 11 - 18 years. The focus of the residential provision is to enhance the pupils' learning and independence. Two groups of residential pupils stay each week with one group on Monday and Tuesday evenings and a second group on Wednesday and Thursday evenings.

The residential accommodation is on the first floor above the school and comprises of a social dining area and four flats. The flats have four bedrooms with adjoining adapted bathrooms and shower facilities. Each flat has its own kitchenette and living area.

The school moved to new purpose built premises in January 2013 and is co-located with a secondary school in Stevenage. The last inspection of the school took place in December 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- clarify whether the school's procedures are compatible with and have regard to Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols managed by the police or local authority.
- further develop the medication administration guidance when residential pupils are considered competent and capable of administering their own medication.
- finalise the guidance for staff in relation to personal emergency evacuation plans for residential pupils.
- 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

The outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding in all aspects of care. Residential care staff are knowledgeable and understand the many diverse needs of the residential pupils. This knowledge is used well when consulting residential pupils and planning routines and activities that meet individual needs. Specially designed equipment and targets set, enables residential pupils to develop their skills in every day living and include: skills relating to moving independently; cooking; feeding themselves; washing and dressing. This greatly enhances the residential pupils' feeling of independence and self-worth.

Residential pupils have exceptionally positive supportive relationships with staff. Residential pupils are respectful of one another and close friendships are evident. Residential pupils report they are extremely well cared for and they really enjoy the residential experience. They spend free time in their own flat or visiting friends in other flats. Residential pupils enjoy the freedom they have and the ease in which they can move about the building without having to rely on staff. One flat specialises in developing independent living skills in line with individual ability and these include planning, budgeting, shopping and cooking meals for themselves and others. All residential pupils progress and develop as individuals as a result of being in the residential school.

Transition arrangements are exceptional. Residential pupils are extremely well prepared for moving into and when leaving the residential school. Residential pupils are admitted to residential life at a pace that suits them and this may take place over several months. When they are leaving, residential pupils may have individual or group sessions with a counsellor. This helps them to look to the future and understand their feelings about the changes ahead. This support reduces anxiety about moving and develops their confidence in how they will manage.

There is 100 per cent attendance at school from the residential provision unless there is agreement for authorised absence. Residential pupils learning is enhanced by the support provided during activities and during homework times. Equipment to complete homework is available in the flats that may not be available at home such as large print work sheets. These arrangements effectively enhance the educational outcomes of pupils.

Residential pupils and their parents are extremely complementary about the quality of care provided and the improved outcomes for residential pupils. Residential pupils consider the only way the service could improve is to move the service closer to their own homes to enable them to get to the school quicker. Parental responses are extremely positive about the support provided to them and their children. Residential pupils benefit greatly from continually developing support ensuring they achieve their full potential in daily living and education.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of care provided is outstanding. The needs of residential pupils is paramount in the minds of residential school support staff. Staff are good role models and the warm, friendly and respectful interaction between staff and residential pupils is a particular strength. Residential pupils were seen to respect each other and staff.

Residential pupils' health care is well managed. Nursing staff are on duty over the 24 hours and oversee the administration of medication. An extensive range of professionals have input into the care planning ensuring the residential pupils needs are consistently recognised with services provided to meet these highly individualised needs. These include a paediatric consultant, paediatric nurses, physiotherapist, occupational therapist as well as a speech and language therapist. The consultant visits fortnightly and oversees the health care needs of pupils. The

speech and language therapist draws up a specialist eating and drinking plans and recommends specialist equipment for individual residential pupils. Meals provided in line with these plans ensure residential pupils are able to enjoy meals safely and develop their ability to eat by themselves which enhances their feeling of self-worth.

All the residential pupils stated that the meals were very good, better than they had before and they tasted 'wonderful' one residential pupil saying, 'The scrambled eggs are as good as my granny's.' Residential pupils are able to choose from a range of meals on the menu and have a healthy diet.

Residential school support workers are aware of the individual pupils' communication needs. Residential pupils are encouraged to use their own means of communication and staff are aware of each pupil's communication methods, for example their individual signs used and eye stare. Staff awareness and specialist equipment ensures individual pupils, including those with very limited ability are able to communicate to some degree. This means all residential pupils have a voice and are able to make choices throughout the day. Family members report that they are kept up to date with events and the communication with them is exceptional.

Sufficient staffing ensures the needs of residential pupils are met. There is an excellent 'dependency rating' tool used to work out the number of residential pupils staff can care for each night. As a result, sufficient staff are available to meet the diverse needs of the residential pupils and the number of pupils accommodated each night varies.

Counsellor's support is available and residential pupils report being very comfortable talking with the counsellor. Parents are highly supportive of the residential provision and feel that the care given is exemplary. One parent states: '(name of child) loves it here. I am made very welcome; it is brilliant and very safe. I have complete trust in the staff team to look after her health and physical needs. Staff are very friendly, they keep me informed and I trust them to keep (name of child) safe.'

Within the residential areas there is sufficient space for personal development, to have time alone or as part of a group. Specialist rise and fall units in the flats and in the bathrooms help residential pupils become more independent. These units help pupils with cooking and making snacks and in undertaking personal hygiene tasks such as cleaning their teeth. Parents feel fully involved in the care of their child and report they are consulted over the care planning. Young people are proud of their environment and take care of their own possessions when possible.

Great care is taken to ensure activities are inclusive. The activities are organised to support learning and help residential pupils achieve. Adaptations and adjustments are made to ensure everyone regardless of ability is able to take part and have fun. There is also time for residential pupils to follow their own preference such as watching television, listening to music or visiting friends in other flats. This promotes inclusion and independence and the ability to make choices in a safe environment.

An achievement award system encourages residential pupils to develop their skills. This system encourages residential pupils to try something they have previously found difficult. The targets are highly individualised and often aligned to those set in school. They may range from organising an activity, recognising numbers to cleaning their own teeth. Achievements are celebrated which helps residential pupils' confidence in developing their own skills.

Residential pupils at times often understand their own medication administration routine. They may also understand what the medicine is for and will prompt staff when they think this is due. If a young person is due for medical treatment, the paediatric consultant will decide if a residential pupil is 'Gillick competent'. There is no system in place to decide if a residential pupil is 'Gillick

competent' if they are not due for specific treatment. This does not enable those who may be competent to take control of their own routine medication, which would help them prepare for adulthood.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

The schools arrangements are outstanding for the protection of residential pupils and keeping them safe at all times. This is reflected in the quality of policies and risk assessments which staff are aware of and put into practice. The residential provision closed for a short time when the new building was ready to ensure all safety aspects had been addressed. A visiting professional spoke very highly about the way the head of the school manages child protection issues and stated: 'The head works alongside me in protecting the residential pupils. The head attends all the relevant meetings, she is imaginative and has the ability to think out of the box and suggests ways to manage the concern and protect residential pupils.' The social worker is extremely confident that the residential pupils at the school will be kept safe and appropriate action will be always be taken to protect them. As a result of staff vigilance, child protection training and awareness ensure action to keep residential pupils safe is taken.

Clear policies in place, known by staff ensure they are aware of actions to take if there are any concerns about staff practice. For new staff and volunteers there is a quick reference guide on how to deal with a disclosure and actions to take. Designated persons have appropriate training and are aware of the process to follow to protect pupils.

Positive behaviour is expected and promoted. Bullying is not an issue and residential pupils all feel safe. When needed a counsellor works with young people to help them improve their behaviour and understand the consequences of unwanted behaviour. As a direct result there is improvement in behaviour. For example, residential pupils develop the ability to make and sustain friendships, which they had found difficult in the past and this builds their self-esteem and confidence.

Robust implementation of policies and procedures ensure recruitment procedures are safe. All checks are completed before staff start work and appropriate records are maintained. Residential pupils meet new staff and some are involved in the recruitment process by being on the interview panel. There is always at least one person who has the safer recruitment practice training on interview panels for new staff. As a result all adults involved in the care of residential pupils are sufficiently checked or supervised which keeps residential pupils safe.

The building is new and the school moved in at the beginning of this term on 7 January 2013. There is a specialist maintenance team across the site to ensure the accommodation is well maintained and the head of the school and other staff are working with them and the builders to finalise the remaining 'snagging' issues across the school site.

The head is aware that many of the policies and procedures used in the previous building have to be reviewed and amended, such as the fire evacuation drills and generic emergency evacuation plans which were in place. Plans are in place to employ someone specifically to carry out the review of policies and update them if needed. Access to the residential area is by stairs or a lift and the lift may be operated by emergency services if required. The residential pupils are very proud of their new environment and enjoy the open space and freedom this offers them.

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

Leadership, management and organisation of the residential provision is outstanding. The management team have a good understanding of the residential provision and there is a clear

development plan in place. The quality monitoring and a self-evaluation report highlights strengths and areas they wish to develop. This ensures there is a clear vision for the future and the actions needed to get there. Residential pupils contribute to the development of care practices and managers plan to enhance parental involvement and invite them to take part in more activities with the residential pupils.

External monitoring takes place routinely and monitoring reports made available. An independent counsellor is available to the residential pupils who think she is very approachable and supportive. The school intend to have an additional visitor available to see the residential pupils. The previous visitor undertaking this role left in December 2012. Residential pupils have people they can talk with who are independent of the school and report they are easy to talk with and very nice.

The new building is co-located with a local secondary school. Senior managers are working effectively with different contractors across site. Regular meetings are developing good working relationships and everyone is aware of their new roles and responsibilities.

Residential school support workers and nursing staff have very clear guidelines with regard to core training and refresher training needed. Specialist training for residential school support staff ensures they are able to support the residential pupils effectively. Examples of training include: emergency medication administration training. This ensures pupils receive medication on outings that means they can access the wider community. Effective monitoring of training ensures staff refresher training is provided on time that keeps staff up to date with latest guidance.

All staff receive regular supervision and support. Performance is assessed annually and apart from a newly employed member of staff, all have relevant Level 3 diploma training or are on this course. There is an on-going training programme and new members of staff will be working towards this diploma within three months of completing their probation. This is a change to policy to ensure the new national minimum standards are met. Supervision takes place regularly and staff feel supported by peers and management. The staff team is varied with different genders, age, race, culture and experience. This ensures staff have the skills and competence to meet the diverse needs of the pupils they care for. Staff all take part in various activities within the residential provision and are very respectful to one another and the young people in their care. This ensures young people have very positive role models in their life.

A copy of the government's statutory guidance on children who run away and go missing is available and known by staff. The school has a missing from home protocol in place. Written confirmation that the protocol is in line with local procedures is not available. No residential pupils have gone missing from this site or the previous site.

Equality and diversity is managed very well. Residential pupils receive support from professionals according to need and staff work effectively with parents and others to ensure they access the services needed. Activities on occasions focus on celebrating different customs and recently all residential pupils had their names produced in Chinese characters. These actions help young people to develop an understanding of the wider world.

The views of residential pupils are continually sought during the day, through surveys and the school council. Staff take account of the views expressed and these are central to how care is then provided. This ranges from giving choices on how they want their toast cut to being involved in organising activities. Residential pupils are on the school council which meets regularly. This enables residential pupils to bring up any issues they have. Recently the focus of these meetings has been the move to the new building. Requests to be able to see the new facility were made and residential pupils visited the site before moving in. Residential pupils benefit greatly by having a child-focused staff team who seek out and respect their views.

There have been no complaints about the school. Parents feel there is no reason to complain as staff are proactive, they listen and take action to address any small issue they or their child may have. Staff work extremely well with parents, they are proactive, and look for ways to resolve issues before there is any need to complain.

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	117679
Social care unique reference number	SC056425
DfE registration number	919/7022

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 RSS
Number of boarders on roll	26
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	11 to 18
Headteacher	Ms Maria White
Date of previous boarding inspection	08/12/2011
Telephone number	01438 726999
Email address	head@lonsdale.herts.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

