

Wargrave House School

Wargrave House School, Wargrave Road, NEWTON-LE-WILLOWS, Merseyside, WA12 8RS

Inspection dates	11/02/2013 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 support and care in a comfortable and stimulating environment that meets their individual needs, resulting in them benefitting from improved personal, social and emotional outcomes.
- Residential pupils enjoy living in a safe environment, where achievements are celebrated, the promotion of equality and diversity is strong and disability is not seen as a barrier to experiencing a full, enriching lifestyle.
- Residential pupils live in an inclusive environment, with high levels of consultation in place to collect their views, thoughts and choices, which are reflected in the life and routines adopted within school's residential provision.
- Daily routines and working practices promote and guide pupils towards a more independent lifestyle so they can take appropriate risks in trying out new experiences and tasks in a safe and secure environment.
- The organisation and leadership of the school is outstanding, with a particular strength being the willingness to implement consistent and effective monitoring, along with the ability to evaluate all areas of operation and implement changes in the school's quest for continued improvement.

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 informed about the inspection at 09.00 on the first day of the inspection. During the visit, that was phased over three days including some evenings, individual discussions took place with managers, senior staff, residential workers, residential pupils, some family members and representatives from placing authorities. Observations of practice were undertaken giving opportunities to mix and speak less informally with staff and pupils. A selection of policies, records and written guidance were sampled.

Inspection team

Graham Robinson

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

This is a non-maintained special school, established in 1971, for students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The school operates as a registered charity (charity number 1104715). It offers a day school, weekly and part-weekly residential boarding for up to 14 students at any one time who are aged from 5 to 19 years. Residential facilities are on-site both in the main school building and in the post-16 department, Lakeside House. The school was last inspected in January 2012.

In September 2012, following approval from the Department for Education, a specialist college catering for students aged 19 - 25 opened. As some residential provision is provided, the service has been registered with Care Quality Commission. This new provision does not fall within the jurisdiction of this inspection and therefore forms no part of this report.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- evaluate the statement of purpose with a view to reflecting the strengths of the residential provision in greater detail
- review the wording 'denial of rights', currently used to title written sanction records, to provide a more acceptable phrase.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Residential pupils are achieving outstanding outcomes in all areas of their development. They receive excellent levels of support and care allowing them to prosper socially, emotionally, physically and educationally. Strong, meaningful relationships are developed, with individual differences accepted and valued by all living and working in the school. This allows pupils to develop trusting relationships with appropriate role models.

Responses received from parents and representatives from placing authorities are all very positive regarding the way pupils are looked after and supported. For example, one parent said about her child; 'he has grown in confidence and self respect.' Another said; 'my child is safe and happy. Staff are supportive. The school has a holistic approach to care and support. It's a privilege having my child at the school.' Parents' comments are backed up by a pupil's social worker who says; 'this is the best placement in my experience regarding how they (staff) communicate with children who have autism.'

Residential care staff are knowledgeable and understand the diverse needs of the residential pupils in their care. This knowledge is used effectively when communicating and consulting with pupils when planning routines, activities and leisure pursuits; these are both meaningful and meet individual need. Records and photographs give an insight into the range of activities taking place. Opportunities are provided for pupils to become engaged in community activities where they can help and assist with certain tasks. For example, some pupils help with the catering provided at a local community centre. As a result, pupils benefit from developing a greater appreciation of other people's circumstances, giving them a feeling of self worth, achievement and satisfaction.

Regular, daily consultation with pupils is a particular strength of the school, with pupils consulted about a range of issues affecting daily life and routine. Staff work with them to create a sense of inclusion, identity and community within the residential provision. Pupils' views, along with parents' views, are taken account of and included within the individualised plans and strategies in place. The two residential areas have established their own sense of identity, reflecting the tastes and interests of pupils residing in them.

Staff employ a range of different communication techniques to meet the needs of individuals. This leads to excellent levels of communication between staff and pupils, which ensures that the level of on-going consultation taking place is outstanding. This gives pupils a sense of inclusion, worth, purpose and direction, with their views and thoughts being used constructively to plan for change.

Residential pupils settle into an environment where boundaries and expectations of behaviour are well established. Pupils say they are comfortable with this and it provides them with a feeling of security. The behaviour of residential pupils throughout the inspection was observed as excellent, with pupils being responsive to each other's needs and treating each other with respect, sensitivity and understanding. This tolerance for peers leads to a strong sense of community which is apparent throughout the school.

Residential pupils are very well prepared for life beyond the school. All pupils are expected to undertake practical tasks within their daily and evening routines. For example, all pupils in one residential unit produced individualised shopping lists, then went shopping to the local supermarket and on return, assisted staff in putting the foodstuffs purchased away. This is part of the planning and preparation in place for pupils to embrace independence and lead a more independent lifestyle. Underpinning this is recognition that promoting independence commences

when pupils arrive at the school. Planning documentation and individual risk assessments reflect this.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of residential provision and care is outstanding in all aspects. It is designed and organised to meet the specific needs of pupils who reside at the school. The two residential areas have single occupancy bedrooms, some of which are en-suite. Bedrooms can be personalised to suit the taste and interests of the occupant. The standard of furnishings, fittings, equipment, décor and general state of repair is high.

Residential pupils enjoy good health, along with a healthy lifestyle. Their health needs are being promoted positively. Detailed health plans ensure individual needs are assessed and met. The school health nurse position has become a full-time post since the previous inspection, leading to some improvement in the monitoring and management of areas such as medication. The school's own therapists, along with the excellent links maintained with external specialist services, ensure all health needs are well met.

Residential pupils are encouraged to improve their lifestyles through diet and exercise. They are consulted, along with parents, about what activities and leisure pursuits they wish to follow. Key workers monitor and ensure that pupils undertake regular exercise and oversee their diet. As a result, pupils enjoy improvements to their general health and fitness levels.

Staff promote healthy lifestyles in a variety of ways. Residential pupils actively engage in a wide range of group activities, individual interests and leisure pursuits. For example, individuals have opportunities to attend community-based projects and activities that serve their specific needs and interests. They benefit from eating healthy meals that take account of any special dietary requirements they may have. Pupils are encouraged to try unfamiliar foods, appreciate different cultures and try international cuisine. Festivals and religious events are celebrated.

Residential pupils benefit and thrive in a safe, supportive and nurturing environment. Excellent, detailed care plans, individual risk assessments and strategies identify individual needs, which include identity, religious, cultural and racial needs. Plans are reviewed and updated regularly to ensure they meet current needs as pupils develop and progress. Pupils evaluate their own experiences within the school with staff on a regular basis; action is taken as necessary to update plans and strategies.

Residential pupils benefit from the excellent relationships developed with staff, who work openly, transparently and communicate positively with them. As a result, pupils enjoy living in a stimulating and trusting environment where they are cared for in a supportive atmosphere. This helps them to engage with adults in a positive way and develop trusting relationships.

The ethos and working practices developed in the residential provision are based on developing and maintaining positive relationships, coupled with high levels of effective communication. This is an area in which staff are highly skilled. Parents report favourably regarding the high levels of communication that exist between the school and themselves. This has been enhanced with the school implementing a more proportionate approach to the use of mobile phones by students in out of school hours.

No parents raised any issues or concerns regarding the quality of care received by their children. They support the high aspirations the school has for its pupils, with disability not viewed as a barrier to engaging in a full and active lifestyle. This gives pupils a more positive view of themselves and others and results in a significant improvement in their emotional resilience and

knowledge gained.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

The school has outstanding arrangements designed to keep residential pupils safe at all times. This is reflected in the range of policies, procedures and risk assessments in place, which are regularly reviewed, updated and put into practice. They underpin working practices developed by the school where safety is given a high priority. For example, in the robust implementation of policies and procedures that relate to the clearance and recruitment of staff. As a result, only suitably checked people work with or have contact with pupils.

The welfare of residential pupils is safeguarded, with staff having the necessary leadership, knowledge, experience and training in safeguarding procedures, to keep pupils safe. The school maintains excellent links with external agencies tasked with keeping children safe. Potential safeguarding issues are dealt with appropriately, ensuring young people are protected.

High staffing levels, coupled with sensible deployment of staff around the campus, are effective in minimising incidents of bullying. Pupils say that bullying is not a problem and are confident that staff would be quick to intervene if needed. Pupils say they feel safe living at the school and this view is replicated by parents and representatives from placing authorities.

Residential pupils are supported to work positively through difficulties. For example, since the previous inspection improvements have been made to the way pupils' opinions are recorded following an incident of physical intervention. Behaviour management is handled sensitively and with understanding. Staff look for supportive, practical solutions to behaviour management issues rather than relying on punitive measures.

Staff are skilled at diffusing difficult situations and incidents and at recognising and putting the needs of pupils first. They work pro-actively to stop minor incidents and periods of agitation from turning into more serious incidents. Excellent monitoring and evaluation of all incidents ensures each pupil's individual strategy is kept under review and adapted. As a result serious behaviour management incidents are minimised.

Residential pupils are protected with a range of risk assessments that identify hazards both in and away from the school campus. Pupils participate in regular fire drills and can safely exit the residential areas when needed. Checks to maintain a safe environment are regularly undertaken. Pupil's individual risk assessments, coupled with coping strategies, promote a safer environment for all. Individual strategies are updated as required, based on each pupil's identified risk and progress.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

Outstanding

The leadership, organisation and management of the school and its residential provision are outstanding. There is a continuing drive to improve outcomes for residential pupils, with regular, consistent and on-going monitoring and evaluation of practice. New initiatives are introduced if it is felt to be in the best interests of pupils. For example, pen pictures for each pupil, which encapsulate plans, strategies and daily requirements have recently been designed and introduced. They give staff an instant insight into each pupil's individual needs and daily requirements. As a result, pupils benefit from an improved consistency of care.

Residential pupils benefit from having a practical, child-focused management team, who have a clear vision of how the residential provision should continue to move forward and develop. Consultation levels with staff, pupils and parents is high, creating a fully inclusive environment.

This is deemed to be a particular area of strength for the school. Managers are supported by a staff team who are fully committed to the ethos, aims and working practices developed in the residential provision. They demonstrate a team-centred approach and understanding of their role and responsibilities. They work cohesively with parents and other school staff to address each pupil's individual needs. The aims of the residential provision are clearly stated for both parents and pupils.

Residential staff receive excellent support, along with regular supervision and performance assessment. This helps to improve their knowledge and working practices. The school implements and has an active, on-going training programme which provides in depth induction for new staff and allows longer serving staff the opportunity to gain appropriate professional qualifications. All staff receive additional, regular training to revise and update their knowledge and practice. This ensures staff possess the competences and skills to effectively meet the diverse needs of each pupil.

The management team has a clear understanding regarding the strengths of the residential provision and areas in need of improvement. Both the internal and external monitoring of the provision takes place systematically, with monitoring reports being completed regularly. They contain elements of quality assurance and evaluation to ensure practice is accountable. Reports review performance and identify areas for improvements. School improvement plans take account of issues raised. Residential pupils contribute effectively to elements of the monitoring process and can discuss their views.

Residential pupils live in an caring, energetic, lively, supportive and child-centred environment. Staff work co-operatively with families and other professionals to address young people's individual needs. Staff work with consistency and look for ways to resolve issues with pupils in a non-punitive way. They work through difficulties and challenges patiently, supportively and positively, recognising the needs of pupils and ensuring those needs are put first, addressed and then met.

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	134888
Social care unique reference number	SC022446
DfE registration number	342/7009

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	Non-maintained residential specialist school
Number of boarders on roll	22
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	5 to 19
Headteacher	Mrs Sheila Jaeger
Date of previous boarding inspection	17/01/2012
Telephone number	01925 224 899
Email address	enquiries@wargravehouse.com

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