

Windlestone School

Windlestone School, Chilton, FERRYHILL, County Durham, DL17 0HP

Inspection dates	10/10/2013 to 10/10/2013	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Good	2
Residential pupils' safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- Students enjoy the residential experience enormously. Relationships with staff and with each other are exceptionally good; mutual respect being a cornerstone of the school's philosophy. Students value the difference that staying in residence makes to their progress in all aspects of their lives.
- The school is outstanding at keeping residential students safe. Staff have a detailed understanding of current safeguarding procedures and practice. Measures to combat bullying are highly effective and create an environment where residential students feel happy and secure.
- Care planning for residential students takes full account of their individual needs and circumstances. Staff ensure that residential students are able to have an effective voice in how they are cared for.
- Leadership of the residential provision is sound and has capacity for further improvement. Managers and staff are able to demonstrate how living in residence contributes to the outstanding outcomes achieved by residential students.

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

Inspection team

Nicholas Murphy

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Windlestone School is a residential special school maintained by Durham County Council for 70 children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is situated in a semi-rural environment in Chilton, County Durham. The school provides 20 residential places on weekdays for boys and girls, aged from 11 to 16 years old. Accommodation comprises a purpose-built residential block with two ten-bedded mixed gender units. Most bedrooms are single-bedded and all bedrooms have en-suite showers and toilets. Residential students have access to the extended day facilities provided at the school until 7.30pm each weekday. The residential provision was last inspected in October 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Revise the records relating to residential students going missing, including more detail and using current terminology.
- Revise the system of recording sanctions so that the views of the residential students are more easily recorded; ensure that there are no breaches of confidentiality.
- Consider setting up a separate record which shows all training undertaken by residential staff, enabling managers to evaluate training needs and potential deficits more effectively.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for residential students are outstanding. Residential students have warm, trusting relationships with staff. They greatly enjoy the company of staff and are happy to confide in them when necessary. Relationships between residential students are also exceptionally good. They show each other consideration and respect, creating a community where the differences between individuals are acknowledged and respected. As a result, students love their time in residence and all feel included and valued.

Residential students have made substantial progress in developing confidence and good self-esteem. In education, residential students' attendance is virtually 100% and they make outstanding improvements in their attainments. In comparison with their peers in day provision, the value that residence adds is clearly evidenced. One residential student said, 'living here definitely helps with my school work. I have better relationships with teachers and the support assistants who work in the unit and in class help me do better. We also do homework in the unit and this makes me learn more quickly.' Another said, 'when I stay here I get more sleep, so I'm better able to concentrate in school.'

All residential students who moved on at the end of the last school year achieved excellent examination results and have secured college places. A celebration party, with parents and carers in attendance, provided these students with a rousing send-off.

Residential students relish the varied opportunities to try different activities and experiences. One student recently took part in a multi-day voyage off the east coast of England on a sail training ship. He spoke with enthusiasm of where he had gone and what he had learned, even though it was hard physical work. Others have recently represented the school in sporting competitions with other, mainstream, schools, performing very well. Residential students are in excellent health. They make positive lifestyle choices and take responsibility for their own personal care needs.

Residential students are confident in making their views known, and are happy to contribute to decision-making about aspects of life in residence. Two residential students sit on the whole-school council, a valuable experience which builds confidence and resilience. One residential student said, 'this place isn't like other schools. Here, you can have more control over your life.' Girls are significantly outnumbered by boys in both the residential provision and the wider school. However, they do not feel disadvantaged by this and are achieving the same excellent level of progress as the boys.

Quality of residential provision and care

Good

The quality of care provided to residential students is good. All residential care staff also work within the school as learning support assistants. This enables a consistent continuity of care between the two settings and the operation of a 24-hour curriculum. What this means in effect is that work with residential students to help them achieve planned targets can take place continuously and so be more meaningful. It also means that staff can provide skilled support to students in residential time when they are doing homework, thus increasing its usefulness.

Care staff have worked hard to further improve the quality of care plans. As a result, they are now more focused on each residential student's individual needs and the day-to-day work necessary to secure improvement. Regular individual mentoring sessions by staff ensure that residential students are aware of their plans, know how they will be supported to make progress, and can celebrate their achievements. When asked about the quality of support that the

residential setting provides to students, a social worker said, 'I wish that all the schools I work with were like that.' The particular needs of female resident students are fully reflected in their care plans. In addition, extra support for this minority group has been provided by a local authority health professional, who runs regular girls' discussion groups.

There is a wide range of activities provided for residential students. These include physical and sporting pursuits, cultural and artistic opportunities, as well as time spent on simple recreation and relaxation. Although there are ample ways for residential students to occupy their time within the school, extensive use is also made of facilities within the community. This ensures that residential students retain a feeling of inclusion in wider society.

Arrangements to promote the health of residential students are comprehensive and effective. The residential provision has excellent links with local health providers, ensuring prompt attention to any student's health needs. The system for the administration of medication is particularly robust, keeping residential students safe and ensuring that health conditions receive the right treatment. Care plans address the full range of health needs including those relating to emotional and sexual development.

Food provided by the school is of very good quality, well cooked and attractively presented. This attention to detail encourages residential students to make healthy choices.

The quality of the residential accommodation is excellent. The design of the residential units enables students to spend time with each other and staff, or in their rooms. The en-suite bathrooms have been further improved since the last inspection by the provision of additional fixtures and fittings. Residential students have complete confidence that belongings they bring in from home will be safe. As a result, most residential students like to personalise their rooms with important items like photographs, posters, and toys. This signifies that students really do see the residential provision as a home from home. In addition, staff enable residential students to keep in touch with family and friends.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

The residential provision is outstanding at keeping residential students safe. Procedures for vetting staff are extremely robust and ensure that only people suitable to work with children are employed.

The management of bullying within the residential provision and the wider school is exceptionally strong and effective. Residential students themselves have real ownership of the bullying issue. Students (many of them residential), recently made a professionally-produced anti-bullying film. This addresses all aspects of bullying, including homophobia, and provides an excellent resource for helping students develop assertiveness. Staff consistently demonstrate their commitment to stamping out any form of intimidation or discrimination. The school has commissioned a specialist professional who spends a day a week on site, doing direct work with students as well as advising staff. In addition, all staff are unreservedly attuned to the possibility of bullying. They exercise vigilance over the interactions between students at all times in a way which is discreet, but allowing swift intervention when necessary. Residential students know that, if they have any issues with bullying, they can approach staff or a range of people independent of the school. This depth of staff awareness of the issue, and their expertise in recognising and dealing with it, creates an exceedingly safe environment in which residential students feel very comfortable.

It is extremely rare for students to go missing during residential time. The school has established protocols with the local police and safeguarding agencies in accordance with statutory guidance. Staff are fully aware of the action to take should a residential student go missing. There is a central record of all such incidents. However, the format restricts the amount of relevant

information that can be recorded, and contains terminology that is outdated and inappropriate.

Residential students behave extremely well. Rules are minimal; one residential student saying, 'there aren't many rules. What's important is that everyone treats each other with respect.' Residential students understand the need for give and take within group living and as a result the atmosphere within residence is happy and harmonious.

The excellent relationships between residential staff and students provide the foundation for managing any negative behaviour. A social worker said, 'the student with whom I work has people round him within residence who know him and can help him through difficulties.' Staff are skilled at redirecting and diffusing the behaviour of residential students who are angry or upset. Staff use their deep knowledge of each residential student's individual needs, informed by good plans and risk assessments, to maintain good order. As a result, there is little need to use restraint, and the incidence of sanctions is greatly outnumbered by the use of praise and reward for positive behaviour. Whenever a sanction is used, staff discuss the reasons for it, and its effectiveness, with the residential student. The residential student then signs the record book. However, the detail of the student's views is not always recorded, and the practice of signing the book containing records of other students breaches confidentiality.

All staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. In particular, the school manages allegations against staff in strict accordance with national and local guidance and procedure. This professional approach safeguards residential students, and assures parents and placing authorities that any concern expressed by a student will be taken seriously and addressed properly.

The safety of the accommodation provided for residential students is managed outstandingly well. All necessary checks on utilities and equipment are meticulously carried out at the required intervals. Residential students have an excellent understanding of the importance of fire safety and cooperate fully in fire drills and instructions. Access to the accommodation is secure, without restricting the liberty of residential students.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Good

The leadership and management of the residential provision are good. Senior staff have recently updated the school's Statement of Purpose and the brochure for students. These documents are of excellent quality, detailed yet attractively presented and easy to read. This ensures that all potential users of the residential provision, including residential students, know the needs the school is intended to meet and how it will meet them. As a result, young people being considered for admission to the residential provision are less anxious and settle in more quickly.

Senior staff within the residential provision are an integral part of the overall school management team. This arrangement complements the deployment of staff across both education and residential settings, and ensures that there is a consistency of leadership at all times. Such an approach creates a community which is ordered, productive, and safe.

All residential staff are appropriately qualified. Following a recommendation from the last inspection, the two residential unit leaders have undertaken some management training. This has enhanced their skills in supporting staff and monitoring their performance more effectively. There is a good programme of training for residential staff which is delivered in a number of ways. These include formal training, mentoring, or attendance at team meetings and briefings. As a result, residential staff keep their skills refreshed and their knowledge up to date. Staff receive regular professional supervision and annual appraisal. The latter enables managers to identify and evaluate training needs on a regular basis. However, it would be helpful for the training undertaken by all residential staff to be brought together in one document so that any skills

deficits can be readily identified.

Monitoring by the independent visitor is very thorough. The visitor sees and evaluates all required records, as well as recording the extensive discussions held with residential students and staff at each visit. Recommendations made in the independent visitor's reports help to drive improvement. The school has made further improvements since the last inspection, acting on all the recommendations made and enhancing the service provided within the residential provision. In addition, the headteacher and other leaders have embarked on a programme of sharing good practice with other similar schools. This will enable further improvements to be made. The headteacher provides regular reports to the governing body in respect of the residential provision. This ensures proper and effective accountability for the operation of the school.

Residential staff and managers maintain all necessary records, and keep personal information on residential students securely. Case files are well organised, so that staff can easily access care plans and risk assessments and share them with teachers.

There have been no complaints since the last inspection of the residential provision. However, the routes for residential students to make a complaint, should they need to, are signposted throughout the school, and all students have confidence in the process.

Residential staff and managers have good relationships with parents and carers and communicate effectively with them. This can be about everyday matters like medication, or more in-depth discussions such as behaviour management. For example, staff have spent time with the carer of one residential student helping them to operate a behaviour management scheme consistent with that used in school. This has resulted in more settled behaviour when the residential student is at home. The social worker for this student commented, 'residential staff have worked very well with the carer in helping them to manage the student's behaviour.'

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	114347
Social care unique reference number	SC007615
DfE registration number	840/7030

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 residential special school
Number of boarders on roll	20
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	11 to 16
Headteacher	Mr Tim Bennett
Date of previous boarding inspection	04/10/2012
Telephone number	01388 720337
Email address	windlestone.school@durhamlearning.net

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