

# Bleasdale School

Bleasdale School, 27 Emesgate Lane, Silverdale, CARNFORTH, Lancashire, LA5 0RG

<b>Inspection dates</b>	29/11/2013	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	Good	2
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is good because

- The head teacher and the senior team leaders provide leadership and direction and are progressive and forward thinking. They are dedicated and committed to their role. The implementation of a well-thought-out development programme continually improves the facilities and resources for residential pupils. Care staff are committed to achieving excellence and obtaining accreditation for their work. For instance, since the last inspection, the school hoped to achieved the bronze award for Investors in People but were delighted to receive the gold award.
- Staffing levels are well organised and meet the needs of the residential pupils. A well-coordinated training programme equips care staff with the skills and abilities to work with vulnerable pupils. Staff reflect on their practice and continually enhance their skills as a result of the good support they receive. They work cooperatively, confidently and competently. Systems are in place for ensuring that staff are able to summon a quick response should problems occur. This keeps both residential pupils and staff safe.
- Staff consistently meet the aims of the service by providing a very high standard of personalised care. Daily routines are very well established and reinforced by staff. Parents, carers and social workers are very positive. They comment that residential pupils make excellent progress from their starting points, as a result of extremely successful joint working arrangements. Professionals associated with the setting describe these as being, 'very effective and a critical factor in the progress that that young people make.'
- The diverse needs of pupils are recognised and catered for, as a result of the comprehensive assessment of needs that is completed prior to them being admitted to the residential setting. The integrated, child-centred approach adopted by staff encompasses each and every child. Each one is understood and appreciated for their differences. Care staff contribute greatly to the role the school has to play in helping pupils to achieve their potential. Residential pupils derive immense enjoyment from the social activities provided and develop skills and interests that they can take into adult life.

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- It has been suggested to the school that they can improve their practice further by increasing the opportunity for young people and staff to contact someone independent of the school, for the governing body to monitor all records each half term and to verify all references verbally before staff commence work at the school.

### **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. During the visit, observations of practice were undertaken including speaking with staff and residential pupils. A tour of the school was completed. A visit to the residential unit at key times, morning and evening, was completed. A selection of policies, records and written guidance were sampled, including parents and children's surveys. Individual and group discussions took place with managers, senior staff, residential workers and residential pupils. A range of evening activities were directly observed.

## Inspection team

Elaine Clare

Lead social care inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

Bleasdale School is a residential special school operated by Lancashire County Council Education Department and registered with the Department for Education. The school's primary function is to provide children with profound and multiple learning disabilities with a positive and safe educational experience while boarding at the school.

Up to 19 children reside at the school for up to a maximum of 38 weeks of the year. All children go home every other weekend and during the school holidays. Other children attend the school on a daily basis. A large, multi-disciplinary staff group meet the complex educational and physical needs of the children.

The residential unit is separate from the school. It is a large country house with many historic features. There are splendid views across the bay with extensive grounds and gardens. The unit is provided with a range of facilities to cater for the individual needs of the children.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- identify an independent person whom residential pupils can contact should they have concerns at the school (NMS 2.2)
- ensure that references are verbally verified for all members of staff recruited to work in the school (NMS 14.1)
- ensure monitoring visits each half term by the governing body checks all records with particular reference to physical intervention (NMS 20.2)

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

### Good

The outcome of the boarding experience is good. Residential pupils live in an inclusive boarding community in which their individual needs are recognised and met. The house is busy with the children having fun. The environment is stimulating, vibrant and created with the residential pupils at its centre. Residential pupils engage in an extensive range of activities within school and in the community, such as music groups, trips to the theatre, Christmas crafts and being members of the local Guide group. They enjoy spending some time relaxing with each other and staff in the main hall, for example, watching DVD's or listening to music. Overall, this means that the residential pupils have a strong affiliation to their residential environment and these practical and social skills add significantly to their enjoyment of life.

Safeguarding arrangements are good and protect residential pupils who feel safe and secure in their environment. It is clearly evident from observing residential pupils, that they enjoy their time in residence. Parents and carers are very complimentary about the school. This is demonstrated by the comments during the inspection along with the outcomes of questionnaires to parents undertaken by the school such as 'we are so thankful she got into this school because she's a different child, she has friends and is making such good progress.'

Residential pupils have a strong sense of belonging and their wishes and feelings are of paramount importance to staff. They are consulted in various ways so that all their 'voices' can be heard and acted upon. Residential pupils are enabled to make choices in their lives; for example, choosing what parts of their meal to have and when and a choice in what colour to do the craft in the Christmas craft activity. Consequently, residential pupils feel valued, as staff listen to and act upon their requests.

Residential pupils have good health as a result of the provision of healthy, well-balanced and nutritious meals. Meals are taken in the main dining hall and these arrangements are largely successful in making mealtimes a positive, social event. Pupils also have good health due to the diligent arrangements for the administration of medication and the vast opportunities for pupils to keep fit.

The arrangements for attending to the medical health needs of residential pupils are excellent. The on-going support by the school nurse team is driving standards forward, particularly in the oversight of the arrangements for reducing the amount of medication stock kept on the premises. Parents feel that, their children are looked after if they become poorly at school with care and support given sensitively in accordance with children's individual care needs. Specialist services are also accessed when required such as physiotherapy, speech and language therapy and the on-site school nurse team. This ensures that children's health and emotional needs are fully met.

### Quality of residential provision and care

### Outstanding

The quality of the residential provision is outstanding.

Within the limitations imposed by the age and nature of the building, boarding provision is excellent. Communal areas and dormitories are decorated and furnished to a high standard and provide residential pupils with a comfortable and relaxing environment while making excellent provision for their recreational needs. An on-going programme of maintenance and refurbishment ensures that facilities are continually improved and any damage is quickly repaired. Residential pupils show pride in their warm and relaxed accommodation and this supports their learning.

Pre-admission assessments and care plans are very comprehensive. Through these, staff develop a clear understanding of the needs of the pupils and how to meet them. Care staff again work consistently and effectively implement the strategies outlined. Staff are imaginative and resourceful in identifying new strategies if children are not seen to be making progress.

There is a comprehensive and well-thought-out induction process which is tailored to the needs of new residential pupils, including the opportunity for introductory visits. The intensive and individual work undertaken with new pupils helps them develop relationships with staff and an understanding of the routines and expectations. As a result, residential pupils become familiar with the routines and expectations and settle quickly. School staff provide residential pupils with outstanding pastoral care. Residential pupils experience genuine care from a consistent, stable and trusting care staff team who are committed, well trained and experienced. Residential pupils can approach staff regarding their worries and these are addressed sensitively; however the school does not have an independent visitor. This does not provide residential pupils to contact someone outside of school should they have concerns.

Transition into adult services is very effective. One professional associated with the school comments, 'With all of our cases I have consistently found the school to be very thorough on all aspects of transition, with every child being met and listened to by the head teacher and senior team leader as a starting point, followed by phased student-led transition.'

Residential pupils are empowered to make a positive contribution towards their school life. This high level of positive engagement enables residential pupils to develop; this in turn helps them overcome barriers that may have previously hindered their learning and attainment. Children are afforded excellent opportunities to build social networks, including being involved in external social groups such as attending local youth clubs which leads to good personal development.

Residential pupils develop a sense of social conscience and responsibility to their local community by giving their time and making practical contributions to the area. As a result, relationships between the school and the local community continues to be very positive. Residential pupils are valued for the contribution they make which raises their self-esteem. Some of the projects residential pupils have been involved in, such as planting up tubs ready for the Christmas fair, help them acquire practical skills in readiness for adulthood. The quality of pastoral support is excellent. Boarders receive excellent guidance and support from the care staff who themselves are supported by a committed and driven management team.

There are clear and effective systems for the sharing of information between the residential setting and the school; for instance, within the daily handovers. As a result, all staff develop a common understanding of the needs of each young person and mutually support each other in their roles. Some care staff support teaching staff by performing school duties and arranging educational activities. Residential pupils develop socially, educationally and emotionally as a result of the shared vision that academic and care staff have for their children.

The school has effective systems for the safe handling and storage of medicines. Residential pupils have health care plans which detail their health needs and the action required to meet those needs. Staff actively encourage residential pupils to enjoy and participate in healthy activities, experiences and to take responsibility for their own health and fitness. This demonstrates a commitment to providing residential pupils with positive, healthy and stimulating experiences, while adopting an organised and safe approach.

Specialist diets are catered for and meal times are sociable events and good use is made of the well equipped kitchen within the residential house.

The school makes good provision to safeguard the welfare of pupils.

The welfare and safety of residential pupils is at the very heart of the school. All staff receive training in safe working practices, such as child protection and behaviour management. They fully understand the needs and vulnerability presented by residential pupils and focus on providing a safe and secure environment. A social worker says, 'My young person very much values the school as a safe and supportive environment.'

Residential pupils are protected by the school's safeguarding arrangements. Robust child protection procedures together with regular training, ensures that staff know the action to take if concerned about the safety and welfare of a child. Children show that they feel safe and secure living at the school. Staff have a clear and comprehensive understanding of individual needs and risks. Staff utilise their skills well to ascertain opinions and feelings with regard to the way in which support is provided to keep children safe.

The application of thorough recruitment procedures protects children from having contact with unsuitable people. This helps to safeguard young people. The school carries out recruitment checks, but this does not always, on every occasion, include the verification of written references before staff start work.

There is a fully accessible complaints procedure. This is shared with parents and ensures that they are well informed and know how to make a complaint. Although children are unable to verbalise their concerns, staff are particularly skilled in understanding the non-verbal means of communication used by children. They proactively respond to gestures and facial expressions to resolve issues affecting children, thereby ensuring their needs and preferences are met. There have been no formal complaints made since the last inspection. General issues raised are given the highest regard and acted upon without delay by the head teacher.

Physical restraint is used when it is necessary to safeguard the welfare of young people or others. Staff are trained in safe management techniques and use these consistently. The frequency of physical restraints is extremely low and are of short duration and are low level, such as an escort. The school keeps records of physical restraint as required and in practice there is good oversight of these at a senior level within the school; however they are not being monitored by the governing body. As a result there is no objective oversight into the use of holds on residential pupils.

There is low risk of bullying at the school due to children's profound disabilities and medical needs. However, the school has a good quality anti-bullying policy in place, together with a comprehensive anti-bullying resource pack which can be accessed by staff. Children are responded to in a quiet and gentle way which contributes towards their emotional well-being.

Staff are aware of residential pupils' vulnerability and the risks they face in the community. They work hard to ensure that risks to residential pupils are effectively managed. There are individual risk assessments and plans for what staff should do should a residential pupil go missing. The school has a copy of the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocol and procedure which has been agreed by the local authority and police. This is not an issue for this school due to the high supervision levels by staff.

Fire safety checks are carried out at the required intervals in line with guidance from the fire officer, including regular fire drills involving the whole school and residence. The senior management team at the school ensure that regular and on-going evaluations of the service take

place. This means that young people are afforded good care and support, in an environment that is assessed as safe and meets their needs fully. The school also has detailed environmental and fire risk assessments and all necessary checks, such as electric certificates are in place. This ensures that children live in a safe residential environment.

### **Leadership and management of the residential provision** **Good**

Leadership and management of the residential provision is good.

The residential provision is well valued for the overall contribution it makes to the school and for the role it plays in the personal development of each residential pupil. Residential pupils benefit from a nurturing environment in which they feel that people care. Well-established daily routines bring consistency and stability to residential pupils' lives.

Care staff are guided in their role by a forward-thinking and experienced management team whose primary focus is to improve the life chances and opportunities for residential pupils. Currently there is no head of care, a position that has been difficult to recruit into and this has resulted in a long delay in appointing an appropriate candidate. As a temporary measure management of care has been undertaken by the senior team leaders acting up into the position. The head teacher is fully aware of this shortfall and the appointment of a new head of care is imminent.

There is a strong desire and commitment to continually improve the service. The management team have an insightful awareness of some of the strengths and weaknesses of the service. This includes addressing the area to improve from the last inspection; staff have received training to develop their professional practice. Strategies to address identified weaknesses are outlined within the school's development plan.

Some provision is made for residential pupils to express their views about the school's practices and to make suggestions for improvement. The school is fully aware of the diverse nature and needs of residential pupils and care planning is highly individualised in recognition of these. All residential pupils make progress in all aspects of their lives as a result of the implementation of strategies outlined within individual care plans.

The staff team is diverse in gender, age, experience and qualifications. There have been a number of changes in the composition of the staff team but these have been well managed. New staff are well supported in their role by more experienced members of staff. The school's own induction and training programmes effectively equip new staff with an understanding of their specific roles and responsibilities and gives them confidence to perform these. Arrangements for staff to complete the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards and the Diploma in the care of children and young people, as required by national minimum standards, are in hand.

The school communicates effectively and regularly with parents, carers and the placing authority. It shares information and informs them of the progress that young people make. One social worker says, 'My experience of the school with regard to regular communications during the transition of new students and their day-to-day progress is very positive.' Visits to parents enhance the joint working partnership and enables the school to receive parental feedback about its performance.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	119861
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC058077
<b>DfE registration number</b>	888/7007

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Kairen Dexter
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	24/04/2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01524 701217
<b>Email address</b>	head@bleasdaleschool.lancs.sch.uk

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