

Lonsdale School

Brittain Way, STEVENAGE, Hertfordshire, SG2 8UT

Inspection dates

10/12/2013 to 12/12/2013

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 live in a safe and inclusive environment. Excellent levels of consultation with residential pupils means staff actions reflect the wishes and choices of residential pupils.
- Disability is not seen as a barrier and residential pupils are encouraged to experience a full and enriched lifestyle. Transition to the service is exceptionally well managed and residential pupils are very well prepared for the next stage in their lives.
- Medical facilities, the nursing and speech and language input into care planning and delivery of care to residential pupils is a particular strength.
- There is an exceptionally experienced staff team providing excellent role models, offering continuity of care. Positive, nurturing and sensitive relationships enable residential pupils to thrive, develop as individuals and trust the adults who care for them.
- The leadership team shows a commitment to develop practice and continued development. Safeguarding practices are extremely robust. There is a clear emphasis and willingness to reflect on practice and implement changes that will further enhance practice and the quality of care and safeguarding procedures.

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 is able to have 26 residential pupils as agreed by Department for Education in four residential flats. At the time of the inspection there were four places not used due to the assessed need of the residential pupils receiving a service.

Three hours' notice was given prior to the start of the inspection. The inspection methodology included: observation of boarding routines and practice; scrutiny of school policies and records; discussion with parents on site; meetings with staff and residential pupils. Discussions took place with a range of staff responsible for leading; managing and organising residential care these included residential staff, support staff and the head of school. External professionals supporting the service were also spoken with and include: social workers, Paediatrician, a Fire officer and councillor.

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 February 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to develop the quality of monitoring by the governors and the subsequent reports
- Further develop the records relating to fire evacuation procedures to ensure actions are recorded and any issues raised are addressed
- Improve the clarity of recording in incident reports to ensure they reflect recent training guidelines

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

The outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding in all aspects of care. This is because there is excellent consistent care and medical support. Disability of residential pupils is not seen as a barrier to developing as individuals and experiencing a fully enriched lifestyle.

Residential pupils benefit enormously from the care taken at the time of transition to ensure they are well prepared to stay overnight and that all their medical needs can be met. This means transitions to and from residential care are highly personalised. Family members are extremely complimentary over the care taken to ensure their child is ready emotionally to stay away from home. This means that residential pupils have a highly inclusive yet individualised residential experience. Transition planning is exceptionally well managed and as a result, residential pupils are well prepared for moving into and leaving the residential school. This helps them to look to the future and understand their feelings about the changes ahead, which reduces their anxieties about moving.

Care staff actively encourage the development of high levels of independence through daily routines and special events in the residential provision and in the community. These range from developing self-care skills, eating unaided and being able to make decisions about their own care and activities they want to take part in. Residential pupils are able to visit friends in other flats in the evenings and attending various activities in the school or in the community. As a result, residential pupils are continually developing their skills for adult life at a pace that suits them.

Seeking the views of residential pupils is central to practice and their views influence planning of routines and activities. Mutual respect is evident between staff and residential pupils. Residential pupils are involved in planning events when possible and they raise money to support local charities. All residential pupils progress and develop as individuals because of being in the residential school. Residential pupils enjoy their time and say they really like the staff, the activities provided and being with their friends. This greatly enhances the residential pupils' feeling of independence and self-worth.

Residential pupils and their parents are very complimentary about the improved outcomes the residential experience offers. Parents are extremely positive about the support provided to them and their children and parents report, 'My daughter has benefited enormously from her residential time, she had gained a lot of confidence and enjoys meeting friends. This is all thanks to the opportunities provided in residential time and the dedication of the staff team.' Another parent saying the outcomes for their child are exceptional and things they learn in residential are then used at home which enhances their life experiences at all time. Residential pupils have exceptionally positive experiences and relationships with staff and other pupils. As a result, they benefit greatly from continued development and support ensuring they achieve their full potential.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of care is outstanding. Parents, social workers and visiting professionals are extremely positive regarding the quality of the care and service provided. Parents state 'The care is beyond outstanding, it is phenomenal and staff go above and beyond what could be expected.' They also state 'Staff know the children very well and are very caring,' and 'A strength of the service is the exceptionally good communication as I feel my views on care are important and what (name of child) learns here helps her at home.' Visiting professionals say 'Staff go beyond the call of duty; children are very well cared for and nurtured. It is a lovely place to be a part of and young people feel valued and cared for.'

A paediatrician reviews the medical needs of residential pupils annually and is available for advice and guidance. Nurses are available 24 hours a day; they oversee the health planning and medication. Care and nursing staff work well together to meet the highly individualised health needs of residential pupils. Training is provided to care staff to assist them understand the medical needs of residential pupils and to administer medication both in the residential houses and in the community. The medication administration systems are sound. Because of this support, residential pupils' medical needs are exceptionally well managed enabling them to have a full and active life both in the flats and when in the community.

Residential pupils state, 'I think it is great here, the head of school is great, there is a lot to do and the staff are friends and fun as well.' Residential pupils enjoy activities both on site and in the local community such as walks, football and swimming. Residential pupils and their family members report they are extremely well cared for and they really enjoy the residential experience. Residential pupils respect difference and close friendships are evident. Family members state, 'This establishment has brought my daughter on unbelievably since starting. She has grown into a confident young person ready for the next stage in her life.'

Detailed care plans look at the whole child and identified targets to help them progress. A multi-disciplinary approach to care is evident. Behaviour management plans are implemented when needed and help residential pupils to look at their behaviour and develop social skills.

Pastoral care for boarders is very good. A councillor is available to the young people and many say they would go to her if they were sad or wanted to talk to someone other than care staff. This provides residential pupils with opportunities to discuss the care provided with someone not directly responsible for their care. No complaints have been received by the service. Residential pupils and their parents say there is no need to complain as any small issue they may have is taken on board and addressed. Staff are very vigilant, know the young people well and discuss any changes in behaviour with carers and others as appropriate. This ensures changing needs and any safeguarding issues are addressed.

The quality of the residential provision is very good; although two baths are out of commission, others are available for use. The fittings and adaptations to the building meet the needs of the residential pupils. Staff are always in the flats when residential pupils are present and there is a process of monitoring visitors ensuring the safety of residential pupils. The furniture in the communal area is adapted to suit the two very different groups who stay on Monday and Tuesday nights to those staying on Wednesday and Thursday nights. This means, residential pupils have a safe, bright and cheerful living environment that meets their needs. Residential pupils personalising their own areas by bringing items from home should they wish.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

The arrangements are outstanding for the protection of residential pupils and keeping them safe. Staff are vigilant and share any concerns they have with the relevant professionals. Teachers, care and nursing staff work very well with safeguarding staff as and when needed. Practice has developed over the last year and multi-disciplinary meetings take place regularly with a view to sharing information, which helps protect pupils. All staff recruitment interview panels have someone who is trained in safer recruitment practice on them. Processes are in place that risk assesses any issues that may arise during the recruitment process. This means that the residential pupils are kept safe.

There is an excellent awareness of health and safety issues and action is taken immediately to address potential hazards. Residential pupils and their family members consider the residential flats are a safe place to live. Fire Officers feel that the arrangements for the detection and

prevention of fires are excellent. The records of fire drills undertaken in the residential area are not maintained and the assessment regarding night time drills is not recorded. However, drills are undertaken and recorded centrally. As practice is safe, this does not affect the life of residential pupils. The service is provided in a new building and there are a few snagging issues that they are working through. This includes fitting new flooring on the first floor in the area leading to the residential flats as it was lifting and trying to resolve why two assisted baths are not working properly.

Restraints have not taken place in the last year. Incident records maintained describe the incident and action taken following this. The management oversight of this is excellent; action is taken immediately to help residential pupils understand the consequences of their actions. This supports pupils develop strategies and manage behaviour in a more positive way in the future. A member of staff not involved in the incident monitors the records, meets and discusses the incident with the pupils. Improved behaviour, helps residential pupils make and sustain friendships and develop as individuals.

Staff have recently received training in de-escalation and managing behaviour that they are bringing into practice. This looks at use of speech and body language and how this may affect behaviour. When incidents do occur, staff review the practice leading to the incident and make amendments to risk assessments and practice. The record of one incident since the training does not correlate with the new language used in the training provided. For example, the use of 'escorted' does not clearly define how a child was moved and this had to be discussed with staff following the incident. Staff feel the training provided has made them more aware of the impact they have on situation and they are confident in de-escalation situations, therefore preventing the need for restraint and sanctions by diverting them away from potential dangers.

Child protection awareness training is provided to staff and appropriate consultation and referral to local child protection professionals take place. Social workers are extremely complimentary about the staff's safeguarding practice and awareness and the openness of the management team. Learning from incidents influences practice development, such as, improved information sharing to ensure all the information is correlated regularly. Residential pupils are kept safe by staff that understand the many facets to safeguarding and follow child protection procedures at the school.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding

Leadership, management and organisation of the residential provision are outstanding. The management team have an excellent understanding of the residential provision and there is a clear development plan in place. The head of the school is leaving at the end term and the deputy head will be acting as head of school until the post is filled.

Care is taken to ensure the residential experience meets highly individualised needs as expressed in the Boarding Statement of Principles. The quality monitoring and reflection on practice continues to highlight strengths and areas they wish to develop further. This ensures there is a clear vision for the future and changes are quickly made to improve the service provided.

The new building is co-located with a local secondary school. The head teacher and senior managers are working effectively with different contractors across site. Regular meetings with contractors and commissioning authority take place. These look at issues across the entire site to ensure work is finalised and priority given to health and safety issues that need to be addressed.

External monitoring by Governors takes place routinely and monitoring reports made available. These reports are being developed to ensure the visitor is able to provide a clearer picture of the service provided and reflects the views of the residential pupils. The format of the report does not

easily identify areas for development and this is one area considered for further development. An independent counsellor is available to the residential pupils who think she is very approachable and supportive.

New staff receive appropriate induction then undertake level three training. All other staff are trained to level three or above. Support staff have very clear guidelines with regard to training and are aware of actions to take if they have concerns re staff practice. Staff have specialist training required to meet the needs of residential pupils which includes emergency first aid, emergency medication administration training. Staff training is monitored with refresher training provided on time. Staff are well trained for the work they have to perform.

All staff receive supervision and support. Weekly staff meetings provide support and guidance from internal staff and external staff provide support and advice as required. As a result, staff feel supported by peers and management. The staff team consists of different genders, age, race, culture and experiences. Staff are therefore confident in their ability as a team to meet the diverse needs of the pupils they care for. Staff are positive role models and treat each other and the residential pupils with respect. This ensures young people have very positive role models in their life who they know will listen to them and take action to address any issues they may have.

The school has a missing from home protocol in place that was taken from the local safeguarding board's protocol. Although no residential pupils have gone missing from this site staff are aware of what to do should this occur. Family members are extremely positive on the ability of staff to keep their children safe in the home and when on outings in the community.

Equality and diversity is extremely well managed. Within the school difference and disability is not seen as a hindrance to achieving and arrangements are made to ensure residential pupils have a full active life. Residential pupils receive support from a range of professionals as required. The school council meets regularly and is an excellent forum for residential pupils to air their views on both school and residential services. Residential pupils benefit greatly by having a child-focused staff team who seek out and respect their views.

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	12/02/2013
Telephone number	01438 726999
Email address	admin@lonsdale.herts.sch.uk

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