

# Ratcliffe School

Ratcliffe Special School, John Nash Drive, DAWLISH, Devon, EX7 9RZ

<b>Inspection dates</b>	29/01/2014	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Good	2
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is good because

- The overall effectiveness of the residential special school provision is good. Staff at all levels work effectively together to enable residential pupils achieve outstanding outcomes.
- Residential learners benefit from a positive, nurturing and enabling environment. Individual needs are fully assessed and young people receive excellent support to improve their social skills, self worth and behaviour.
- Residential learners say they thoroughly enjoy their boarding experience. They feel their lives are enriched by their opportunity to board and that it improves their confidence and emotional resilience.
- Safeguarding arrangements are extremely thorough. Named senior staff take lead responsibility for child protection. Residential learners confirm they feel safe and well supported and have a number of people to talk to.
- All national minimum standards are met. Excellent progress has been made in response to the last inspection. Three areas of improvement were identified during this inspection. These relate to:

### 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

This inspection was announced on the morning of the first day of the inspection and took place over three days. Two evenings were spent meeting with young people and all five residential houses were visited. Residential pupils were very happy to talk with Inspectors and made a very positive contribution to the inspection. Several staff at all levels were consulted along with five parents who all conveyed exceptionally positive comments about the excellent progress their child had made since attending this residential school.

## Inspection team

Norma Welsby

Lead social care inspector

David Kidner

Social care inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

This residential special school is a local authority provision for young people aged between five to 16 years. Pupils are of mixed gender, with communication, interaction disorder and social developmental needs, many of whom have been identified as being on the autistic spectrum. The school provides a flexible residential service for up to 45 young people, between Monday and Thursday. In addition, the school provides extended day support usually up to 6pm, for the majority of the 80 pupils who attend the school.

The school is located in a coastal town in South Devon. Both the school and its five residential houses are on the same campus. All residential pupils have a single bedroom. All residential areas have kitchenettes, dining and sitting areas. The school has grounds of approximately 10 acres, a vegetable garden, poly tunnel greenhouse and keeps hens. Residential pupils have the use of a wide range of facilities including outdoor hard and soft play areas and many of the school's indoor facilities, such as the computer suite, during planned after school activities.

The school and the residential provision were last inspected in December 2013.

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

- Provide expert oversight to ensure all young people benefit equally from opportunities to plan and cook highly nutritional and home cooked meals.
- Ensure equality and diversity needs, which are well addressed in practice, are consistently included in written care plans.
- Review and reorganise staff files to ensure safe recruitment evidence is secure and easily accessible.
- Ensure all policies and records are reviewed and updated to reflect developing practices which are part of the service's improvement agenda.

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

### Outstanding

Outcomes for residential learners at this provision are outstanding. Individual needs are fully assessed and staff really get to know young people very well. Residential learners say they enjoy exceptionally good quality relationships with staff and that they feel valued. They learn tolerance and respect for each other and staff.

Residential learners thoroughly enjoy their boarding experience and have a strong affiliation to their houses. They see boarding as an opportunity to spend time with friends and pursue a wide variety of activities. They feel safe and nurtured there, while also feeling challenged to develop and achieve personal goals. Residential learners confirm that they feel consulted and feel their opinions are valued. Knowing this has improved their sense of self worth and has contributed to the really strong sense of community that exists within the school.

Young people feel their residential experience complements their learning. For example, they have many opportunities to develop a wide range of skills, which staff are very enthusiastic to support. Young people feel that boarding really helps to prepare them for their next stage in life after school. One young person said; 'Coming to this school has been the best thing that could have happened to me. It has helped me in so many ways and I feel so much more confident about my future now'. Parents consulted during this inspection also made exceptionally favourable comments about the school and the excellent outcomes their child has achieved. One parent referred to how her child attending the school has enabled the family to stay together, while others referred to their child as 'flourishing' and 'thriving'. Another parent said; 'This school has been fabulous for my daughter. It has really helped her to develop her confidence and independent skills. There has been a 100% turnaround in her, she is more mature, calm and respectful. I cannot praise the service enough'.

Residential learners also make excellent progress in achieving healthy lifestyles. They have a strong sense of their own well-being and report that they feel well cared for if unwell. Young people are given opportunities to enhance their understanding of healthy eating and develop key skills. For example, older students have regular opportunities to plan, budget and cook healthy meals. Some of these meals are of an exceptionally high quality and these experiences are really providing young people with excellent skills and high expectations around healthy eating and home cooking. However, these very high standards are not consistently demonstrated across houses, as currently there is no oversight from catering staff. Young people are also encouraged to take regular physical exercise and engage in a wide range of physical activities such as football, swimming and horse riding.

### Quality of residential provision and care

### Good

The quality of the residential provision and individual care it affords is good. Staff across the school are highly motivated and work well together, recognising the benefits that boarding brings to learners. For example, staff know that learners personal, social and educational development is enhanced by their residential experience.

Care planning is thorough, personalised and child-centred. These plans are regularly reviewed, involving young people throughout the process. Health plans, behaviour management plans, risk assessments and positive handling plans are devised if needed. The school is in transition, moving care plans to an electronic format. All staff will be able to access and review care plans as and when needed. This is work in progress. While equality and diversity issues are well addressed

in practice, these are not consistently outlined in current care plan records.

Healthcare arrangements, including access to external support and services, are well established. Arrangements for managing and administering medication are safe and effective. Appropriate policies and procedures are regularly revised and updated.

Meals are of a good quality, providing good choice and good portions. Special diets are well catered for and every encouragement is given to individual's to extend their dietary range where this is limited. Meals are varied and nourishing and in a recent survey 100% of young people said they were satisfied with the provision of meals.

The school offers a wide range of after school activities that are enjoyed by both day pupils who have an extended day and residential learners. Without exception all young people spoke positively about the range of opportunities they have to enjoy and achieve, such as regular sports, trips to the beach and lido, youth clubs, cooking and computer games. Staff are very motivated to provide these activities which positively impacts on young people's participation.

The residential accommodation is provided in five houses located across the school site. All of the residential accommodation is of a good standard with some being of an exceptionally high standard. Careful and considered assessment is given to ensure a compatible mix of residential learners in each house. All young people have their own single bedroom, regardless of the number of their overnight stays, which they value immensely. Bedrooms are very well furnished and highly personalised. Living areas are very domestic and comfortable and young people enjoy a variety of activities in these areas including meals, playing a range of board games, listening to music and enjoying dvd evenings. These opportunities help young people relax and supports their learning.

### **Residential pupils' safety**

**Good**

The school gives a high priority to the safety of its residential learners. There is good emphasis on helping young people develop a better sense of their own safety. Residential learners confirm that they feel safe while staying overnight at school and know how to access support if they felt unsafe. They also feel that safety issues, such as bullying, are well addressed.

There are robust policies and procedures in place to promote safety, including child protection, countering bullying and missing from school. Staff are well trained and named staff take lead responsibility for child protection. All visitors to the school are asked to read summary information and are given details of what to do should they feel concerned about the safety and well-being of a young person during their visit. The school has established excellent collaborative working practices with the local police and local safeguarding services. The school also liaises closely with social workers and families to support safety both within and outside of school hours.

Since the last inspection the school has thoroughly reviewed its approach to behaviour management. This occurred as a result of an area identified for improvement during the inspection. The Principal implemented a period of extensive consultation with young people and due consideration by senior staff and governors. This has resulted in what several staff refer to as a 'change of culture'. The impact of this review has led to more emphasis on de-escalation techniques to manage challenging behaviour, a reduction in high level physical intervention, the separation of school sanctions so they do not impact negatively on the positive residential experience and the re-design and re-use of rooms, formerly used for 'time-out. These developments are celebrated by residential learners and staff alike. One member of staff said; 'it is a much nicer place to work now'.

There are robust procedures in place for safe recruitment and vetting of staff. Staff files contain

all the relevant information but specific recruitment records are not easily accessed as many files are very full. Staff retention is excellent and there have been no changes in residential staff in the last year.

The residential houses provide safe, well maintained and homely accommodation. Residential learners enjoy spacious and well equipped facilities that meet their needs, supports their independence and promotes their safety. Risk assessments and servicing arrangements are in place and both staff and residential learners have regular opportunities to practice fire safety procedures.

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

The leadership and management of this residential provision is outstanding. Senior staff across the school are dynamic and aspirational. They are committed to continued improvement and have set challenging targets.

Residential boarders are extremely well cared for. Their individual and diverse needs are well known to staff, who strive to enable them to achieve their maximum potential. The residential provision is highly valued. It is seen as an integral part of the school.

The Principal, senior staff and governors demonstrate a clear commitment to achieving further improvements. For example, areas raised for improvement at the last inspection, including a review of behaviour management have been very thoroughly addressed. The impact of these improvements has led to benefits for learners and staff. It was recognised that policies and procedures and their supporting records need to be kept under review to ensure they fully reflect improvements being implemented.

Staff confirm that they feel really well supported. They have welcomed the positive changes that have occurred during the past year. Staff and residential learners benefit from staff working in designated houses. They get to know each other really well and have established very positive relationships. Staff receive regular supervision and have opportunities to attend a range of meetings and daily handovers. Residential staff are well trained and benefit from a robust programme of professional development and learning.

There is excellent communication with parents and placing authorities and senior staff liaise effectively and work proactively in the best interests of young people. Several parents particularly praised the 'consistent staff team and excellent communication' that exists.

Monitoring visits take place regularly. These have been reviewed and improved following a recommendation at the last inspection. They are thorough and are highly valued by senior staff who act promptly and thoroughly on findings to drive forward further improvements. Since the last inspection there have also been increased activity to secure both new and existing residential learners' views and ideas. As a result residential learners are feeling more valued and confident that they can make a difference.

## 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>	113656
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC003895
<b>DfE registration number</b>	878/7087

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 Cherie White
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	11/12/2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01626 862939



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