

Arbour Vale School

Arbour Vale School, Farnham Road, Farnham Royal, SLOUGH, SL2 3AE

Inspection dates 29/01/2014 to 31/01/2014

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

- The overall effectiveness of Arbour Vale House is outstanding. Residential pupils thoroughly enjoy their time in the house and benefit greatly from the experience. The residential provision is an integral aspect of the school's operation and is a highly valued resource for supporting pupils and their families.
- Arbour Vale House provides an inclusive environment for residential pupils including outstanding accommodation ideally suited for its purpose. Pupils are able to access facilities both within the house, the wider school, and the local community which enable them to participate in a tremendously wide range of recreational activities.
- There is outstanding provision for ensuring the safety and well-being of residential pupils. High staffing levels and the highly effective implementation of relevant policies and procedures contribute to providing an environment which is safe and where pupils feel safe at all times. Parents and external agencies are totally confident that residential pupils are being safely cared for while at Arbour Vale House.
- Arbour Vale House is held in very high regard by parents, social workers, and external agencies involved with individual pupils. 'Excellent communication', 'absolutely first class', and 'remarkable progress', were some of the overwhelmingly positive comments received during the course of the inspection.
- All of the national minimum standards for residential special schools are being met. The school is asked to consider two points for improvement which relate to the personalisation of bathroom facilities, and the improvement in evidencing of pupils views being sought.

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 inspection was carried out at short notice with activities during the inspection including meeting with the school's head, the head of care who has responsibility for managing the residential provision, and a group of care staff. Time was spent observing and interacting with residential pupils in a variety of situations throughout the inspection, including breakfast time, arriving back from school, doing a variety of activities, and joining them for an evening meal. Parents and external agencies were spoken to, and information was gathered from the placing authority as well as online surveys completed by care staff. Relevant records and policy documents were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Brian Mcquoid

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Arbour Vale School is a maintained residential special school located on the outskirts of Slough. It provides education for pupils who have moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, or have an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). The school's residential provision, Arbour Vale House, is purpose-built and located within the school site. There is accommodation for 12 pupils. The stated aim of the residential provision is to work on specific objectives with pupils who have a diagnosis of ASD through education programmes, extended learning opportunities, and the delivery of a 24-hour curriculum. Overnight placements are from Monday evening to Friday morning inclusive.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- provide personalised touches to the bathroom facilities used by residential pupils.
- improve the evidencing of residential pupils being consulted and communicating their views about matters affecting them and their daily lives within Arbour Vale House.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for residential pupils at the school are outstanding. They are happy and feel safe and secure in an environment which is highly inclusive and where they develop remarkably positive and productive relationships with the staff who care for them. Care staff are skilled at meeting the diverse and complex needs of pupils, and collaborative working with education staff, parents, and external agencies is successful in enabling pupils to make dramatic progress in areas of their lives. Improved behaviour, greater self-confidence and self-awareness, increased independence, improved communication, tolerance of others, and better social interaction are all areas where residential pupils have benefitted greatly with some having made dramatic progress when considering their starting points. 'Tremendous work being done with young people', and 'all young people are making real progress academically and socially', were comments received during the inspection from two social workers who have responsibility for seven of the pupils in the residential provision.

Residential pupils thoroughly enjoy the experience of staying at Arbour Vale House and successfully maximise their potential during their stays. They develop new skills and interests while they are there; listening to someone read, baking, and taking part in archery and trampolining are some examples of this. Dramatically improved behaviour and increased levels of independence for some pupils since being at the house has resulted in remarkably positive outcomes for them both within school and in the family home. Exceptional work carried out since the previous inspection has seen one pupil now attending a day college and permanently living at home. Staff support was highly instrumental in achieving a successful transition into college life for the pupil who returned to the house with his parents for the Christmas party. Pupils routinely contribute their views and are able to make a difference to the residential community. Their artwork is displayed throughout the building and the acquisition of four I-Pads solely for their use was instigated by a residential pupil.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of residential provision and the care provided for residential pupils at the school is outstanding. Those pupils identified for a residential placement are subject to a thorough induction that is highly sensitive to the needs of both individual pupils and their parents, with a careful assessment of when a pupil is ready for their first overnight stay. High quality care planning supports the delivery of individualised care which is remarkably effective in meeting the needs of pupils and helping them to achieve positive outcomes. The residential provision reflects the wider school's multiracial pupil body and makes excellent provision for addressing any religious and cultural needs. There is excellent communication and collaboration between care and education staff, and working in partnership with parents and external agencies is a real strength of the residential provision. A parent visiting regularly to spend time with their child, and working alongside an external agency to help a pupil understand a parents illness are prime examples of this.

Parents retain primary responsibility for addressing the routine health needs of their children, however the residential provision makes excellent provision for supporting parents where necessary and for addressing any specific health related needs. Staff work closely with health professionals involved with individual pupils and have the required information to provide safe and effective care. There is excellent provision for the management and administration of both routine and emergency medications. Healthy lifestyles are actively promoted within the residential provision. Pupils enjoy healthy and nutritious meals, and are all able to participate in a remarkably wide range of activities which contribute effectively to their physical and emotional well-being. Arts and crafts, baking, swimming, archery, soft play, sensory activities, shopping,

and rebound therapy are some examples of these.

Arbour Vale House provides accommodation and facilities of a remarkably high standard which are being exceptionally well maintained by an on-site facilities management team. The house provides lots of space for pupils and is ideally suited for its stated purpose. The environment is very welcoming and very child centred with imaginative displays which pupils help create and numerous photographs of them enjoying themselves in a wide variety of situations. All pupils have their own rooms, the décor of which they are able to personalise, and which are furnished to a high standard. Separate communal areas enable pupils to choose where they spend their time while additional space allows them to spend time on their own should they not be able to tolerate being in a group. The facilities include a multi-purpose room used for reading, arts and crafts, and games, and there is also a computer room in addition to four I-Pads solely for the use of pupils. Pupils are able to access an extensive range of facilities within the wider school during evenings and also access community facilities on a regular basis.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

There is outstanding provision at the school for ensuring the safety and well-being of residential pupils. Pupil welfare is central to practice across the school, and all policies and procedures relating to safeguarding are being rigorously implemented. Pupils feel safe and secure within the residential provision and both parents and social workers feel entirely confident that they are being safely cared for. There have been no incidents of any residential pupil being reported as missing since the previous inspection, and no child protection concerns relating to the residential provision. The school has an established and positive working relationship with the Local Authority Designated Officer and the staff team within the residential provision are highly trained in relation to safeguarding matters. Staff including the head of care have received training in safer recruitment and the procedures for recruiting staff are rigorous and being effectively implemented.

The promotion of positive behaviour is a real strength of the residential provision with pupils making really significant progress in this area of their lives. There is a highly positive culture within the house within which staff have an intimate knowledge of each pupil and are skilled at understanding their behaviours. They provide clear and consistent boundaries for pupils, working sensitively to manage behaviours which may be challenging while also promoting and reinforcing alternative and more acceptable ways of behaving. Strategies for managing pupils behaviours are being shared with parents and have successfully contributed to the improvement of family life in these instances. High staffing levels provide for the necessary levels of supervision, and bullying or targeting-type behaviours are not a concern within the house. The use of physical intervention is extremely rare within the residential provision and a positive reward system is being successfully implemented. Since the previous inspection the school has adopted a new electronic system for the recording of behavioural incidents across the school and this is contributing highly effectively to the work being carried out with residential pupils.

Arbour Vale House provides a safe and secure environment for residential pupils within which there is excellent provision for the management of risk. Security arrangements ensure restricted access to both the residential provision and the wider school site, and there are systems which provide for the appropriate supervision of visitors. Comprehensive written risk assessments are being regularly reviewed and provide the necessary safeguards for activities undertaken by pupils both on and off site. Excellent provision for health and safety is provided by the on site facilities management team who promptly address any safety issues and ensure the routine inspection and servicing of the premises and associated facilities and equipment. This includes provision for fire safety. There is an up-to-date fire risk assessment; regular fire evacuation practices are carried out by care staff with all residential pupils having an individual fire evacuation risk

assessment.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding

Leadership and management of the school's residential provision is outstanding. The head of care is part of the school's senior management team and Arbour Vale House is an integral and highly valued aspect of the school's operation. The aims of the house are clearly stated in what is excellent and accessible information provided for parents and prospective pupils. Well established operational systems are being implemented highly effectively and help to provide a safe and consistent environment for pupils. Communication with parents and external agencies is remarkably good with some parents visiting regularly to spend time with their children, and social workers commenting that they have excellent communication with staff. Partnership working with staff is 'extremely effective', commented an external professional who is supporting care staff working with an individual pupil and his parents.

Staffing arrangements in the residential provision are exceptionally good. A highly qualified, experienced, and well-trained staff group operate extremely well as a team, and receive excellent support from the head of care. High staffing levels ensure the necessary support is available for each pupil at all times. 'I am very impressed with staff', 'staff have a detailed knowledge of individual pupils and their families', and 'staff are excellent at working collaboratively with the school, parents, and social workers', were comments received from young people's social workers during the course of the inspection. Care staff receive formal supervision on a regular basis and undertake a high quality training programme that enables them to work extremely successfully with residential pupils. The school is extremely supportive of staff training with some staff having qualified to teach pupils archery and rebound therapy.

The school demonstrates a very strong commitment to the continuing improvement of the residential provision and the service it provides for pupils and their parents. Arbour Vale House does not stand still; on-going self-evaluation is a real strength and there is a proactive stance to developing practice for the benefit of pupils both within the residential provision and across the school. The introduction of a new approach to monitoring pupil behaviour is an example of this. Recommendations and points for improvement from previous inspections have always been acted upon. The school's governing body play an active part in the residential provision with a representative carrying out monitoring visits on a monthly basis. Policies and procedural documents support and promote good practice across the school and these are being regularly reviewed and then approved by governors. All the required records are in place, there is very close monitoring of the quality of care being provided and a comprehensive annual report is provided to the governing body in relation to the residential provision.

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	110185
Social care unique reference number	SC370928
DfE registration number	871/7035

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	
Number of boarders on roll	10
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	
Headteacher	Mrs Debbie Richards
Date of previous boarding inspection	14/03/2013
Telephone number	01753515560

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