

The Ashley School Academy Trust

The Ashley School Academy Trust, Ashley Downs, LOWESTOFT, Suffolk, NR32 4EU

Inspection dates	06/02/2014	
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 the residential provision is outstanding impacting, significantly on pupils' personal, social and emotional development. Pupils benefit in terms of access to academic support and a wide range of opportunities.
- There are established and robust safeguarding procedures which are comprehensively implemented by staff and central to the school.
- The school advocates for individual's rights and consistently seeks the views of pupils.
- The residential houses are managed extremely well by an efficient and skilled staff team.
- Significant progress has been achieved since the last inspection with an ambitious drive for continued improvement.

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 of the residential provision, took place within four hours of notice given to the school. The inspection activities included meetings with; the residential care staff, the pupils the Safeguarding Governors, the Head Teacher, Senior staff and the catering manager. Observations of the premises, meal times, activities and residential evening routines formed part of the inspection. Information was gathered from documents, policies, records, monitoring reports and discussions with parents.

Inspection team

Deirdra Keating

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

The Ashley School Academy Trust is a maintained residential special school for 135 pupils of either gender aged between seven and 16 years. The residential accommodation is provided in two houses located on the school site. The school is situated in a residential area of Lowestoft and caters for pupils with moderate learning difficulties who have associated behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The residential provision was last inspected in June 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue the refurbishment programme to include the first floors of the residential provision.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

The outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Pupils thrive in the 'in house' residential provision and benefit significantly from inclusive, individualised care. Extremely good relationships between pupils and staff are pivotal to pupil's social and emotional development and levels of attainment. One pupil asked what he liked about being in-house replied; 'the adults'. Pupils make exceptional progress in their social communication skills, through the established relationships with staff and peers. They demonstrate an excellent understanding of one another's differences through group discussions, team games, and small group activities. Comments from pupils include 'the best thing is seeing our friends' another pupil said 'I like everything about being in house'. A parent spoken to said 'she loves the school; she is so happy and has made friends'.

Residential pupils develop increased self-confidence and positive self-esteem. Staff consistently recognise effort and encourage pupils to develop new skills and try new experiences. The views of residential pupils are highly valued. Daily house meetings encourage pupils to talk about their day and contribute their views. Staff plan evenings with pupils who choose activities. These include; trips out, sporting activities, art, craft and cooking. This helps pupils develop a wide range of skills such as creativity, turn-taking, social skills, and fitness.

Pupils are actively involved in decisions that affect them. For example, they participate in staff interviews to choose a new head of care. Pupils put on house assemblies for the whole school and competently assist with daily house chores. This gives them a sense of responsibility and belonging. Pupils work proudly work through 'My life and independence work in residence' folders with staff. These record the acquisition of domestic and self-care skills such as laundry, telling the time and healthy eating. The consistent teaching of pupils' life skills builds pupil's self-care and independence.

Residential pupils thoroughly enjoy staying 'in-house' and feedback regarding their enjoyment of the residential experience is unreservedly positive. A pupil said its 'one of the best places to sleep I wish I could stay more' another said "you get to do loads of fun things'. For pupils who may have limited opportunities this provides new experiences giving them equality of opportunity. A parent spoken to surmised 'she has lovely time every time she's there and I can see its benefits in the amazing trips and activities provided'.

Induction to the residential provision is well structured. This gives pupils a chance to stay for a tea visit and ensures that they know what to expect. Pupils also benefit from good transitional support as they reach the end of residential provision. The number of nights in house tapers and concludes before term ends. Staff support pupils as they reach the end of residential stays by providing photographic memory books and a leaving party. Pupils talk through arrangements and make choices about their party's. This gives them a period of emotional adjustment. A parent spoken to during the inspection said ' she will be very emotional to leave the house she has loved her time there'.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of the residential provision is outstanding. The continuous exchange of information between the school and residential staff works extremely well. Daily meetings provide key points from the school day that informs residential care staff. This supports pupils' emotional development, building secure foundations on which they can attain and achieve.

Care plans detail all individual requirements of each pupil and are discussed with parents and pupils during induction home visits. Care plans evolve holistically, all details are clear and health

needs are clearly identified. Residential pupils health needs are managed carefully and efficiently. The storage and administration of medication works well. The school has contracted health professionals who work daily in the school. This brings combines specialisms together and ensures that all those involved with the health care of residential pupils understand how to implement their health care plans and monitor their health needs.

Staff provide activities that are exciting, stimulating and varied. They utilise both school and local amenities well to provide pupils with a wide range of experiences. Pupils enjoy relaxed social evenings around the table using their creativity to make arts and crafts. Others enjoy indoor sports including hockey and football where a strong emphasis on playing as a team and inclusion. This provides highly beneficial interactions and exercise. Staff are energetic and participate with enthusiasm providing healthy role models. Staff focus on inclusive fun while maintaining safe boundaries and consistent responses.

The catering arrangements at the school are exceptionally good. The presentation of food is superb encouraging pupils to try new foods in small amounts. Food is tasty nutritious and healthy fruit, salad and vegetables are actively encouraged. Residential pupils enjoy food with enthusiasm. The catering team cater for special events with care and attention to detail including homemade birthday cakes.

The decoration on the ground floor is of a high standard fresh white paint promotes an airy and light atmosphere. Pictures cushions and lamps provide welcoming touches. Pupils' tastes, targets and accomplishments are displayed using photos, art work and posters. This gives pupils a sense of belonging and celebrates their achievements and efforts this includes a hero of the week. The first floor has undergone extensive refurbishment providing a number of single en suite rooms that are modern and comfortable. However, the new décor highlights the first floor hallways which require re decoration.

Pupils are easily able to keep in touch with families using the pre-programmed house telephone. Family member's telephone according to their home lives and staff are accommodating and flexible. Staff are fully aware of family dynamics and support pupils with sensitive insight and understanding. Pupils know their families are accepted and valued helping build a positive sense of identity. One parent said 'nothing is ever too much trouble I have nothing but praise for the house staff'.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

The safety of residential pupils is outstanding. The overall safety and welfare of pupils is central to staff practice and given top priority throughout the school. Staff are unreservedly committed to the safety and protection of residential pupils and provision of a residence in which all pupils feel equally valued and safe.

Staff are meticulous and detailed in compiling risk assessments. These enable pupils to take part in a wide variety of outdoor and challenging activities such as an adventure holiday to Wales. This enables pupils to conquer new challenges and take assessed and measured risk building confidence and breadth of experience.

Residential pupil's behaviour is exemplary; they offer a warm and polite welcome to visitors. Staff consistently reinforce positive behaviour placing an emphasis on safe personal boundaries. Staff always recognise and encourage effort in relation to individual targets and consequently pupils try hard to achieve their targets. Physical restraint is extremely rare; situations are easily contained because staff have a comprehensive understanding of underlying causes and triggers for individual pupils.

There is a strong culture of anti-bullying. This underpins all house routines and activities. Staff have high expectations in the reinforcement of respectful relationships. There are occasional disagreements between pupils; vigilant staff monitor these providing resolution strategies where required. Residential staff are adept in their skill and aptitude in helping pupils resolve their differences. This teaches pupils how to exercise self-control and manage their feelings. Subsequently, each house has developed a respectful culture in which pupils say that feel relaxed and safe.

Police community support officers are regular visitors to the provision; they participate in activities and deliver road safety training. This helps young people understand the dangers of the road and builds positive links with roles in the local community.

Staff are confident and rehearsed in managing child protection concerns. There are clear procedures which staff follow in the event of a concern about a pupil. Staff vigilance, child protection training and careful awareness keep residential pupils safe. Staff work closely with external professionals and services to ensure residential pupils' safety and welfare.

Staff monitor each house to ensure it is maintained well and potential hazards are identified. All visitors report to the school reception where the identity and purpose of the visit is checked. Residential houses are locked and secure. The systems work well pupils are supervised carefully during the start and end of the school day. These arrangements work well and there are no incidences of pupils missing from the site. Health and safety checks meet all safety requirements. Fire prevention equipment is checked and evacuation drills take place at regular intervals. This ensures that pupils practise safe evacuation and understand what to do in the event of a fire.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding

The leadership and management of the residential provision is outstanding. The aims and criteria for the provision translate seamlessly into practice and are integral to the school. There have been significant changes in management of the school resulting in a newly appointed headteacher and recruitment is underway for a new head of care. There are clear interim arrangements for the management of the residential provision. The head teacher and deputy head monitor the care and provide supervision for staff. This provides effective temporary management. This has enabled senior staff to work closely with care staff providing insight to practice and robust monitoring of the provision. Collection of data and new recording systems measure the impact of residential provision on pupil's progress using data to record pupil's social, emotional and academic progress. This monitoring clearly demonstrates the value of the provision on pupils' lives.

The established staff team go from strength to strength. The staff's dedication to the role is unprecedented. Extra duties mean that staff are juggling competing demands there has also been a period of financial uncertainty for the residence. Despite this the care of pupils remains outstanding and the calibre and skill of the staff team is the foundation of the school's success. Feedback from an experienced governor concludes "I cannot sing their praises enough the houses are exceptional places. They are brilliant really brilliant".

There have been no complaints since the last inspection; however, there are many heart felt compliments from pupils, parents and professionals. The partnership with parents and carers is a key strength of the provision. Parents speak highly of the benefits of the residential provision and school. One parent said 'I am very impressed with the whole school I can't think of anything they could do overall to improve'. Another said; 'I can't praise the school enough it's brilliant'.

The residential provision is integral to the school. Dedicated staff have a superb understanding of pupil's diverse characteristics. This results in extremely high quality care based on the value of

individuals and the celebration of differences. Staff value all pupils as unique individuals and ensure that opportunities are offered equally.

Secure storage of detailed informative records provides a clear understanding of pupils' lives and ensures pupil's details are confidential. Overall, the school has maintained an outstanding provision and all national minimum standards are met.

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	137459
Social care unique reference number	SC024573
DfE registration number	935/7003

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	
Gender of boarders	
Age range of boarders	
Headteacher	Ms Sally Garrett
Date of previous boarding inspection	19/06/2012
Telephone number	01502 565 439
Email address	office@ashleyschool.co.uk

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