

# Elemore Hall School

Elemore Hall School, Littletown, DURHAM, DH6 1QD

**Inspection dates** 18/03/2014 to 20/03/2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>51</b>
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 residential provision plays an essential part in the life of the school, and its role is highly valued by residential pupils, parents and staff. Pupils make exceptional progress as a result of their experiences within residence. A particularly rich and diverse programme of activities promotes health, learning, and self-confidence.
- The school keeps residential pupils safe at all times. Some safeguarding practice goes beyond the minimum required, reflecting the commitment of managers and staff to protecting children. The behaviour of residential pupils, towards staff and each other, is excellent.
- The quality of care provided by residential staff is outstanding. Care staff are highly experienced, dedicated and skilled in meeting the individual needs of all residential pupils. Programmes of care are tailored to each residential pupil's needs and abilities, ensuring that all can fulfil their potential.
- The residential provision is extremely well led and managed. As a result, life within the residential units is orderly and productive without ever becoming regimented or oppressive. Managers have created and sustained a strong community ethos which residential pupils share with enthusiasm.

### 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 given notice of the inspection three hours before it commenced. The inspector met with the headteacher, head of care, residential and support staff, a number of residential pupils, and spoke with two parents/carers. Information was also gathered from: school policies and procedures; general records; individual case files; and RSA. Routines were observed at various times of the day in both of the residential units, including breakfast, tea time, and early evening activities.

## Inspection team

Nicholas Murphy

Lead social care inspector

# **Full report**

## **Information about this school**

This is a maintained residential special school for up to 72 boys and girls aged 11 - 16 years. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs due to social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The school is located a few miles outside the centre of Durham. It is a converted country house in its own grounds and has a residential facility for up to 25 boys split between two units. Accommodation is provided for up to four nights a week but is not provided at weekends or during school holidays.

There is currently major building work in progress, due to be completed by September 2014. This will provide a sports hall and other improved facilities which will further enhance what the school offers.

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

- Amend the school policy on physical intervention to make clear the different criteria which apply in the residential provision
- Collate the evaluation and planning of the staff training programme into one document

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

### Outstanding

Residential pupils make excellent progress in how they relate to other people. They get on well with staff and each other, showing consideration and a willingness to help others. Activities within the school encourage an outward looking attitude, for example, in learning about other cultures. Residential pupils have been on a number of foreign trips, and derived enormous benefit from the experience. They also have a good awareness of the needs of others in society. For example, even though many residential pupils themselves come from disadvantaged backgrounds, they participate enthusiastically in charity events. The whole school was looking forward to the Sport Relief Day on the Friday following the inspection. Pupils were particularly anticipating the appearance of staff in fancy dress.

Residential pupils make significant improvements in their self-esteem and confidence. The residential and wider school experience enables them to achieve in ways they would never have thought possible. For example, one photo on display shows a residential pupil in a mid-air leap 30 metres from the ground on a high ropes course. He told the inspector, 'I never thought I could do something like that but when I did I was really pleased.'

Residential pupils have developed a strong awareness of how they are expected to behave responsibly. A parent said, 'I've seen a big change in my son's behaviour, he is more settled and level-headed, much more mature.' A residential pupil commented, 'I'm not as huffy as I used to be, I'm in much better control of my emotions.' As a result, life within the residential setting is ordered yet homely. Residential pupils cooperate with each other and with staff, for example, clearing tables and helping with laundry. Residential pupils are very diverse in terms of background and ability.. However, all residential pupils treat each other with respect and consideration.

Residential pupils clearly relish the opportunity of staying overnight in school. They love the closeness of their relationships with staff and their friends and particularly enjoy the chance to do their favourite hobbies and activities. One residential pupil said, 'I like it here because I get peace on a night. Staff don't shout to get you out of bed on a morning, you can start school all relaxed.' The range of things to do means that residential pupils are almost always able to choose how they want to spend their time. Invariably, they return from activities fulfilled and frequently tired out.

Residential pupils have a strong sense that the living units are 'theirs'. They have a strong voice in day-to-day life within the residential provision, not only through community meetings but also in informal conversation with staff. For example, residential pupils have chosen the colours of carpets and curtains. As a result, residential pupils identify strongly with the school, sharing its values and taking pride in belonging here.

Residential pupils are effectively prepared in moving on from the school. There is a dedicated transitions manager who supports residential pupils in embarking on college courses. However, just as important is the routine within the residential provision. It encourages pupils to make decisions and do things for themselves, such as managing their own personal hygiene. Coupled with residential pupils' development of confidence, this provides a sound basis for later life. Residential pupils are in good health. They have an excellent awareness of the importance of keeping themselves healthy and making the right lifestyle choices.

### Quality of residential provision and care

### Outstanding

The school manages the introduction of new residential pupils sensitively and carefully, taking

account of any apprehension they or their parents may have. Staff have excellent awareness of the needs of each residential pupil, which ensures that their programme of care can be most effective in achieving development. The quality of staff supervision within the residential setting creates a nurturing environment where pupils can flourish and be happy. There is close communication between care staff and teaching staff. Some care staff have formal roles within the school setting, for example in leading bushcraft classes. These links are important in helping pupils to continue aspects of learning and development within their social time.

Care plans have been much improved since the previous inspection. They are succinct and clear, setting targets for each residential pupil which are tailored to their individual needs. Progress against these targets is reviewed frequently, with success being celebrated and new goals being set. This establishes a climate for residential pupils where they are always being asked to push themselves to do better with the support of staff. There is a wide range of activities available to residential pupils. Many of these use facilities in the community, and promote social learning (for example, how to behave in public) as well as providing enjoyment and physical exercise. In addition, residential pupils gain confidence in their abilities and so enhance their self-esteem. A parent said, 'My son loves the activities, the things he does makes him feel more grown up and independent.' One of the facilities being provided in the new build is a dedicated music suite, incorporating soundproof practice and recording rooms. Residential pupils are keenly looking forward to this, a number displaying extraordinary talent and enthusiasm in an after school music session observed by the inspector.

Staff look after the health needs of residential pupils very effectively. They are active in promoting healthy lifestyles. Staff are enthusiastic in leading activities, giving encouragement to residential pupils who initially may lack the confidence to join in. This demonstrates how the residential provision includes every pupil, enabling them to get the most out of what the school offers.

The quality of the food provided in the school is exceptional. There is a wide choice to cater for every need and taste, and staff are proactive in encouraging residential pupils to try new foods. Within the residential units, pupils are able to prepare their own breakfasts, suppers and drinks, and so acquire self-care skills. The residential accommodation is very spacious and well furnished, and provides reasonable privacy for residential pupils when they need it. The grounds of the school are extensive, providing a superb resource for learning and sporting opportunities. For example, bee keeping is a popular pastime. Residential pupils can see not only how honey is made (and eat it), but are also fascinated by the workings of bee society.

### **Residential pupils' safety**

### **Outstanding**

Policies on child protection are clear and well understood by all staff. Outside agencies confirm that the school makes referrals appropriately and promptly. This gives confidence that any concerns about the safety of residential pupils will be managed effectively. Pupils do not go missing from the residential units. Should this happen, staff are clear about what action they need to take to keep the pupils safe.

The practice of the school in prioritising the safety of residential pupils is embedded into daily life. Bullying is very well controlled, with a strong and visible policy which underpins the ethos of the school in valuing and respecting every individual. This gives residential pupils complete assurance that they are safe. One residential pupil said, 'Bullying? I had an issue once but I went to staff and they sorted it straight away.' Another added, 'I've never had a problem with being bullied, I feel safe here.' There have been no complaints since the last inspection. However, residential pupils are totally confident in the process should they need to express a concern. One said, 'If I had any problems I would talk to a member of staff, or if I needed to, I know how to make a complaint.'

Staff are very consistent in promoting positive behaviour. They supervise the interactions between residential pupils unobtrusively but highly effectively. This enables them to intervene very quickly to redirect or divert low-level misbehaviour before it escalates. Staff use their relationships with residential pupils positively, encouraging them to reflect on the consequences of their actions. This helps them to change how they respond to provocation or upset. Because of the staff's skills in managing residential pupils, the number of times that physical restraint needs to be used is extremely low. Nevertheless, staff are well trained in how to restrain safely. They also have a thorough understanding of the requirements governing the use of restraint. The school's policy, however, lacks some clarity about the particular criteria which relate to the residential setting.

The current extensive building work poses potential challenges for the school. However, proactive and rigorous site management keeps pupils and staff extremely safe. It is commendable that the school has required that every construction operative has a Disclosure and Barring Service check. This ensures that there are no people on site who may pose a threat to residential pupils. Support staff are meticulous in carrying out other regular checks and services related to the premises, such as gas and electrical systems. Staff take fire safety very seriously. There are regular evacuation drills at various times of the day and night which incorporate real-life scenarios such as fire on a stairway. This means that residential pupils are well prepared should the worst happen.

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

The aims and principles of the school are clearly set out and incorporated into daily life. The residential provision is seen by managers, staff, parents and pupils as a vital part of the school which contributes to its success. The headteacher and other senior staff are highly visible throughout the school and residential day, providing strong leadership and good example to pupils. Daily routines within the residential setting are clear and well-structured without being institutional or rigid. This gives residential pupils security and predictability but also allows flexibility to take account of differing needs or abilities.

There are always sufficient staff on duty to meet the needs of residential pupils. Staff are well supported through formal supervision and appraisal. This helps them to reflect on their performance and how they can support residential pupils even more effectively. All staff are qualified and receive additional training in response to changing or new demands and concerns. For example, following specific incidents, recent training has included sessions on self-harm and cyber-bullying. The assessment of training need would, however, be more effective if it was brought together in one document.

The monitoring of the residential provision by an independent visitor is of very high quality. Reports are detailed and evaluative, and clearly show the extensive consultation that takes place with staff and residential pupils at each visit. This thoroughness not only provides excellent feedback to management on how to improve further but contributes to keeping residential pupils safe. The headteacher and other senior staff have effective systems in place to monitor the school's performance in how well it meets the needs of residential pupils. At the last inspection, several shortfalls in national minimum standards were identified and some recommendations made to improve practice. All have been addressed, demonstrating the ambition and capacity of the school for further improvement.

## 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>	114337
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC040508
<b>DfE registration number</b>	840/7006

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>	Maintained residential special school
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Richard Royle
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	05/02/2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 3720275
<b>Email address</b>	elemore@durhamlearning.net



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