

Pontville Residential School

Pontville School, Black Moss Lane, ORMSKIRK, Lancashire, L39 4TW

Inspection dates	13/03/2014	
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

- Residential pupils make excellent progress across all areas of their development. They receive exceptionally high levels of wonderful care and support in a comfortable, stimulating environment that meets their individual needs. Consequently, they benefit from improved personal, social and emotional outcomes.
- Residential pupils' safety is of the highest importance. Dynamic risk assessments mean residential pupils are safe and feel safe. Staff are able to swiftly instigate the schools safeguarding procedures in order to keep residential pupils safe.
- The residential provision is extremely well managed by a dedicated head of care and staff team. The provision is integral to the school and is valued highly by senior managers.
- Residential pupils enjoy their time here, they are happy and settled and talk about how the school has made a difference to them. Parents are complimentary about the school they are extremely proud of their children's progress.
- The national minimum standards are all met and in many cases are exceeded. There are two points for improvement relating to the monitoring systems and information on the schools website.

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 contacted on the morning of day one by the lead inspector to announce the inspection.

The inspection took place over three days with feedback provided on the afternoon of day three. During the inspection records and documentation were examined.

Interviews took place with the residential pupils, head of care, headteacher, assistant director, staff and independent visitor to secure their views upon the quality of care provided.

A tour of the premises and grounds was undertaken.

Evening activities were also observed over two nights.

Inspection team

Chris Scully

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Pontville School is a non-affiliated independent school. It provides residential provision for up to 15 boarders in two residential units within the school itself. The school provides day places and boarding for both boys and girls with social communication difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, including autistic spectrum continuum. The residential facility provides care from Monday to Friday afternoon during term time only.

The school is located in a residential area on the outskirts of a busy market town and is set in its own grounds. A range of community facilities in the town are available within walking distance. The last inspection was undertaken in March 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- enhance further the monitoring systems to ensure any slippages in recording are identified and acted upon in particular the sanctions record
- ensure all information and policies on the schools website are up-to-date.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

The outcome of the boarding experience for pupils is outstanding. Residential pupils make remarkable progress and their life experiences are enriched, because of the extensive range of opportunities available to them when accessing the residential provision. Their individual needs and differences are actively acknowledged, supported and celebrated. Residential pupils enjoy exceptionally positive relationships with staff, which are built upon shared honesty, trust and respect.

Residential pupils enjoy spending time with staff and have developed firm friendships with their peers. They say they get on well with one another, but are not afraid to say who can be a 'grump' in the morning. A residential pupil said that they have changed their life around since being here. They say, 'I am so much happier than I was back then and I've made so many friends and people who have respect for me, as I have for them.'

Residential pupils thrive in an environment which is enhanced by a wide range of activities which truly engage their interests. These activities effectively enable residential pupils to develop social, interpersonal and team-building skills. As a result, residential pupils are continually improving in confidence and self-esteem because they are enabled to actively pursue their interests and develop skills for life.

A key strength is that residential pupils continue to progress extremely well in managing their own behaviour and social interactions. They are interested and show an understanding about the needs and feelings of others. During meal times, they chat happily together about what they have done and what they will do during the evenings. Staff support their communication so that exchanges are successful, which effectively fosters their confidence and self-esteem.

Residential pupils know and use strategies that help them to remain calm, such as leaving the room for a short while or asking for staff's assistance. This is significantly enhanced by the introduction of the sensory relaxation room and pop-up tents, which enable young people to find their own quiet space to manage their feelings. By overcoming small difficulties independently, they increase self-confidence to manage larger problems, and consequently their behaviour continually improves.

Residential pupils are at the very heart of everything the school does. Residential pupils feel empowered because they feel staff listen to them and, where possible, act upon their requests such as going to the rifle range or rock climbing.

Residential pupils have a good understanding of the need to be fit and healthy. They engage in a wide range of physical activities, such as football and swimming. They eat a balanced healthy diet and are willing to try new foods to extend their dietary experience. Residential pupils enjoy the social aspects of meal times, especially the opportunities to celebrate one another's birthdays.

Residential pupils are being exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their lives. They enjoy the opportunities to undertake a range of 'jobs' within the setting, which enables them to develop a wide range of life skills. This includes cooking, setting the table, clearing up and doing the dishes. Some residential pupils are becoming skilled negotiators; this is evident from the discussions between residential pupils and staff following a celebration tea to gain additional support for drying the dishes due to the increase in crockery.

Some residential pupils are undertaking driving lessons to enhance their career opportunities when they leave college. Parents say the school has helped their child to 'grow in confidence so

that they feel ready to move on with the next chapter in their lives.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of the provision is outstanding. A considerable amount of hard work, time and effort goes into ensuring communication between all staff is the very best. This is achieved as the school has established a climate of mutual trust and respect. The underpinning approaches used by the school, such as proactive behaviour support and enhanced communication structures, are embedded within the residential service. This means that staff provide residential pupils with continuity of care that is tailored to their individual needs.

Care planning is extremely detailed and allows the uniqueness of each residential pupil to shine. The integration of health, social and emotional needs is effectively captured, provides clear direction within the plans for improving outcomes. Residential pupils are encouraged to participate in the creation of the plans and the decision being made about them. Consequently, their voices are equally respected throughout all aspects of their care. Residential pupils have excellent opportunities to remain in contact with those people who are important to them.

There are excellent facilities for the care of residential pupils who are sick, or who have suffered accidental injury. A sensitively designed medical room, provides a low arousal space in which residential pupils can receive help and support. Residential pupils benefit from detailed health care plans that contain clear descriptions of the communication and behaviour support that they require to ensure they get the help they need to regain and maintain good health.

Residential pupils are confident to approach staff regarding any worries and these are addressed sensitively. All admissions are planned and there is a very caring, structured induction process for new pupils. Communication between care, health and educational staff is extremely effective, hence children quickly settle in the school and residential provision.

The residential setting is an integral part of the school. Excellent communication between care and school staff means they are quickly alerted to any difficulties pupils may be experiencing. Ultimately, they are able to initiate additional support to help the pupil overcome their difficulties. Staff are highly committed to improving the outcomes for residential pupils and have high aspirations for each of them. As a result, pupils are making as much progress as possible in relation to their starting points.

Residential pupils enjoy wide range of healthy meals and snacks. Menus effectively take into account residential pupils' individual tastes, dietary, religious and cultural needs. Meal times are lively social events with plenty of friendly banter being exchanged. Older pupils are demonstrating an increased confidence as they prepare and cook meals, such as lasagne for their peers and staff. They welcome the opportunities to eat out at a variety of restaurants and talk happily about their favourite venues.

Residential pupils have excellent opportunities to build social networks by attending various community groups. They relish the opportunities to engage in activities with their friends both in residence or when they attend various clubs. Residential pupils are developing an understanding of the world around them, the rights and needs of others through everyday interactions. This helps residential pupils to enhance their understanding and appreciation of a multi-cultural society.

The residence is currently undergoing a programme of refurbishment. This includes the creation of en-suite bathrooms which provide a much more homely feel. Plans are also underway to provide sensory bathrooms to further support young people's individual sensory needs. Residential pupil's bedrooms are personalised and demonstrate the young people's individual

tastes and interests, such as favourite football teams, singers and cartoon characters.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

The safety and well-being of residential pupils is outstanding. This is because staff have an excellent understanding of the safeguarding procedures and are suitably trained in child protection. They are extremely aware of the residential pupils' diverse, complex needs and behaviours and how these may impact upon them. The school has appropriate policies and procedures, in conjunction with external agencies, to take decisive action to safeguard residential pupils. Young people are aware of who to contact, including independent people should they have any concerns.

Residential pupils are provided with excellent levels of supervision based upon their age, understanding and ability to make sure they are safe in school and in the community. Excellent advice and support is provided about their personal safety, for example, discussing the potential issues of using social networking sites.

All visitors to the school are suitably vetted and supervised during their visit to ensure the safety and well-being of young people. Staff are very aware of residential pupils' vulnerabilities and the risks they face in the community. They work extremely hard to ensure risks to residential pupils are effectively managed. Residential pupils do not go missing. However, there are risk assessments in place and plans for what staff should do should this occur.

Staff display child-friendly notices around the school and residential environment, to support residential pupils' knowledge and understanding of the roles of staff to help them stay safe. Information includes what they should do if they are worried or upset, or if they feel bullied. Consequently, residential pupils are aware at varying levels of their own safety and are able to take steps to keep themselves safe.

Positive behaviour is exceptionally well promoted and is a key strength of the provision. This is because staff are highly skilled at de-escalating challenging situations. Staff have an innate understanding of each residential pupils ever changing needs, which mean they can effectively adapt behaviour management strategies to continually support them. They can resolve an issue simply by talking calmly to a young person, which enables them to think about what they are doing and consider what the need to do next. This may entail going for a walk or engaging in a sensory activity with staff. As a result the use of sanctions are minimal and the need for physical interventions is extremely rare. Parents say staff provide an environment of 'kindness, tolerance and understanding' they feel staff's 'ability to cope with situations is remarkable.'

Residential pupils are protected by a comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. Staff conduct regular health and safety checks, including fire drills and vehicle checks, to ensure the premises and equipment are safe and secure.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

Outstanding

The leadership and management is outstanding. The highly insightful management by senior managers actively promotes a culture that ensures pupils are always listened to and respected as individuals.

They promote clear visions and values that provide a safe stable, nurturing environment for residential pupils. Their commitment to providing high quality care to each residential pupil is commendable. This has a very positive effect upon them and is evident from the excellent

progress young people are making.

The new head teacher, head of care and assistant director are extremely committed to the on-going development of the school and are constantly looking at new ways to enhance the outcomes for residential pupils. This is evident from the improvements in the environment since the last inspection. As a result residential pupils enjoy a warmer, more homely environment.

Effective systems are established to ensure nothing gets missed. For instance there are daily handovers between residential and teaching staff to ensure a smooth transition of care is secured. In addition each week staff meet as a team and have the opportunities to review residential pupils' progress and undertake training events. Monitoring is generally robust, however recently the monitoring systems have not identified slippages in some records, such as the sanctions record completed by school. This is a recording issue and does not impact upon the care provided to residential pupils.

The Statement of Purpose clearly outlines the aims and objectives of the school and residence. In addition, residential pupils receive a detailed information pack which clearly informs them about the school and the care that is to be provided. As a result, young people are appropriately placed, thereby enhancing their life experience. The schools website provides an extensive range of information about the school however; some of this information refers to the previous head teacher and may lead to confusion.

Residential pupils are cared for by a highly committed and dedicated team of staff who often go above and beyond what is expected of them. Staff say they want the very same opportunities for the residential pupils as would for their own children.

Staff work extremely well as a team. They receive regular professional supervision and meet regularly as a team to discuss how young people progress, and any emerging needs. They have excellent opportunities to attend additional training courses to gain new qualifications and skills, for example, management qualifications. The deployment of staff is extremely child-focused and the high staffing ratio provides residential pupils with excellent continuity of care from people they trust and respect.

All required policies and procedures are in place and known by those required to implement them. Required records are completed and stored securely.

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	133540
Social care unique reference number	SC061727
DfE registration number	888/6050

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	Independent Special
Number of boarders on roll	
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	12 to 19
Headteacher	Mrs Elaine Riley
Date of previous boarding inspection	12/03/2013
Telephone number	01695 578734
Email address	office@pontville.co.uk

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