

# Rowdeford School

Rowdeford School, Rowde, DEVIZES, Wiltshire, SN10 2QQ

**Inspection dates** 13/05/2014 to 15/05/2014

| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>                           | <b>Outstanding</b> | <b>1</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 overall effectiveness of the residential provision is highly effective and an area of excellence within the school. There are examples of practice which are worthy of wider dissemination. For example, highly effective behaviour management strategies that eliminate the need for physical restraint and lessen the need for sanctions; a clear commitment to involving and consulting boarders about the planning and delivery of their care and care plans that are presented in an accessible format for boarders to read and understand.
- A consistently high quality of care is provided by a staff team that is well qualified, highly experienced and enthusiastic about their role. Boarding is valued highly by boarders, parents, associated professionals and the school itself, for the very positive contribution it makes to the lives of boarders. The school is able to demonstrate that boarders make at least good and very often exceptional academic progress when compared with other pupils. This is because boarders benefit from clear expectations of behaviour, a structured routine and from receiving consistent, stable and nurturing care. All aspects of care are highly personalised because the needs of individual pupils are well known and catered for. Staff actively consult and engage boarders in the care planning process which means that any targets set are jointly agreed and have particular relevance and importance to the individual concerned.
- Boarders thrive in all aspects of their development because of the highly inclusive nature of boarding, the highly personalised care they receive and the varied and stimulating range of activities provided.
- The safety of boarders is paramount. Boarders say they feel safe because 'there are always staff here to keep us safe and to help us.' Boarders feel well supported and are protected by robust policies and procedures. These are well known by staff across the different disciplines within the school and are consistently implemented in practice. Boarders are very well protected because staff are vigilant and responsive to indicators of

bullying; behaviour is very well managed; the premises and equipment are regularly and thoroughly checked for safety and recruitment checks completed on new staff are probing and extremely robust.

- The boarding provision is managed highly efficiently. Delegation of responsibility and lines of accountability are clear. Each department within the school performs its task to the very highest standard and for the primary benefit of pupils. Documentation supporting the school's practices is extremely well organised and thorough. For example, the health and safety documentation supports the regular checks that are made and the risk assessments of the premises, school grounds and equipment. The needs of young people are extremely well met by a highly skilled, proficient and passionate staff team. Parents and pupils express extremely high levels of satisfaction with the provision. The school's management team and governors scrutinise of all aspects of residential care although the reports of visits to the residential provision are not highly evaluative of practice. Scrutiny of behaviour management and recruitment checks are particularly robust.

### **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 four hours notice of this inspection. Discussions took place with students, staff and parents; in addition, the inspector reviewed some of the school's policies, records and documentation. All residential accommodation was viewed, meals were eaten with students and activities, relationships and interactions were observed. Pre-inspection surveys completed by staff, pupils and health professionals were taken into account. The school's own self-evaluation and consultation with parents and carers was also considered.

## Inspection team

Barbara Davies

Lead social care inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

Rowdeford School is a local authority, co-educational, special school for pupils aged between 11 and 16 years with complex learning disabilities. The school provides places for a maximum of 130 pupils. All pupils admitted to the school are subject to a statement of special educational needs and disability under the 1996 Education Act. The school is situated in a village located near to the town of Devizes in Wiltshire.

The school provides weekly residential provision for up to 23 boys and girls during the school terms. The residential provision, provided within the main school building, comprises three separate units that accommodate junior boys, senior boys and girls. Referrals for admission to boarding may come from external agencies, the school, parents, carers, or pupils. During this inspection there were 106 day pupils and 18 residential pupils.

The residential provision was last inspected in July 2013.

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

- Ensure that reports of visits to the residential provision cover more areas and are evaluative of boarding practice.
- Provide external training for staff in child sexual exploitation and internet safety.
- Provide lockable storage for boarders.

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

### Outstanding

Outcomes for boarders are outstanding because boarding is a highly inclusive boarding community in which boarders needs are extremely well known and met.

Boarders have exceptionally strong and relaxed relationships with each other and with the staff. They understand the routines and expectations within the boarding houses and largely comply with them. The environment within the boarding houses is calm and relaxing. This, alongside the confident and measured approach of staff, is transferred to boarders.

The behaviour of boarders is exceptionally good and they are extremely respectful and responsive to gentle prompts and reminders from staff. In some instances, this represents exceptional personal development in relation to behaviour displayed in previous settings.

Boarders thoroughly enjoy their boarding experiences and are active participants in the extra curricular activity programme which provides varied, stimulating and challenging experiences. Examples of activities include football, swimming, cookery club, caring for pigs, gardening, adventure activities and holidays on a barge. Through their participation boarders become more confident, acquire new social and practical skills and develop a sense of their own value and self-worth.

Boarders views strongly influence practice. Boarders are proud and have a sense of achievement that the views they contribute to house meetings and the school council are listened to and many of their ideas implemented in practice. Examples include the adventure playground and the new 'trim trail' that is currently being built.

Boarders learn to take care of their own health needs and are active participants in keeping themselves fit and healthy. Young people with specific health needs, such as diabetes, understand and become proficient at taking responsibility for their own health care needs. This is due to the excellent support and guidance they receive from staff and because of the health protocols that have been developed alongside parents and health professionals. A health professional commented, 'It is a very welcoming school and the staff are happy to work jointly with our team to support any health issues. A school clinic is usually accessible for parents and provides good joint working between health and education.'

Boarders are well prepared for their transition to new placements because of the highly intensive support they receive from staff and the highly efficient planning that precedes such a move. Placements are usually identified well in advance of the proposed transition which enables students to be prepared in a manner which best suits their needs. The local authority's view is that the school prepares boarders well for their transition and for the next phase of their life.

### Quality of residential provision and care

### Outstanding

The quality of residential provision and care is outstanding. Care staff are well informed about the needs of boarders because of the comprehensive pre-admission assessment that takes place. Boarders are also well prepared and settle quickly into boarding because of the carefully planned and phased admission that they receive. Care plans inform staff about the needs of boarders and individual targets that have been set. Staff have aspirations for the boarders and are committed to helping them achieve. They monitor progress through regular key working sessions and provide additional support and interventions when required.

Care plans are written in a child-friendly format which makes them fun and easy to read.

Boarders views are represented within the targets set; this makes them relevant and meaningful to them.

Excellent opportunities for fulfilment and development are provided through the varied and exciting recreational and leisure opportunities on offer. Within the limitations set by being a listed building, the school provides an excellent standard of accommodation. Staff and boarders take care of their environment which is very well maintained and decorated.

The health needs of boarders are very well met through well informed health care plans. Procedures for the administration and recording of medication are robust and meticulously adhered to. Boarders are always provided with a good choice of nourishing meals with fresh fruit and vegetables readily available.

The majority of boarders say they enjoy boarding. Most feel that their possessions are safe but some feel that they are not and would like lockable storage to be available in the boarding house. They said that they have not requested this so do not know what the school's response would be.

### **Residential pupils' safety**

### **Outstanding**

Boarders' safety is outstanding. Boarders all agree strongly that they feel safe in the boarding house.

All staff are fully trained in child protection at the appropriate level. The head of boarding is the school's designated child protection officer which means that child protection features high on the agenda within the residential provision with staff always alert for indicators of abuse. The school's child protection policy is consistent with that of the local authority in which the school is located. Close monitoring of issues means that concerns are shared, without delay, with the appropriate person within the local authority. Comprehensive records are kept of any investigations and strategy meetings and of the outcome.

There are no incidents of young people going missing from the school because the staff are vigilant for indicators and are proactive in preventing such incidents. Staff are well prepared should there be such an occurrence as they are familiar with the school's missing person procedure and have good links with the local police. The school is currently reviewing the contents of its missing person policy against the latest guidance to be issued by the Department for Education, particularly in respect of the link between children who go missing and child sexual exploitation.

Similarly the school's anti-bullying is to be amended to include additional information on cyber - bullying. However, in practice safeguards are in place that protect boarders from all forms of bullying. Staff are aware of the potential for bullying and are always alert, vigilant and responsive to any observed or reported incidents. Boarders are encouraged to be kind, respectful and to have an empathy for each other. This is an ethos that is very well role modelled by staff and creates an environment in which boarders know that bullying is not acceptable. Boarders say that they know they are to tell staff if people are being unkind or they are being bullied and that staff 'help us.' Boarders find the 'buddy' system a highly effective way of obtaining support from their peers. In questionnaire responses, all boarders agree that the school deals well with any instances of bullying.

There are positive and proactive policies and practices for promoting good behaviour. The boarding provision reinforces good behaviour and the meeting of individual targets through its reward system. Many pupils make positive changes in their behaviour and overall behaviour is exceptionally good and is very well managed by staff. Staff role model appropriate behaviour and take a measured and reasoning approach when addressing issues with boarders. Because of this

boarders develop strategies and take responsibility for managing their own behaviour. The use of sanctions is rare within boarding and there have been no incidents of physical restraint. Boarders also mostly behave well in the educational setting where physical intervention is also a rare occurrence for pupils from the boarding community. All staff agree that behaviour is well managed.

The school's recruitment procedures are extremely robust and the exhaustive checks completed safeguard against unsuitable adults having contact with boarders.

The safety and welfare of boarders is very well protected because of the well organised and stringent health and safety checks that are completed on the premises and equipment. Boarders are very well equipped to safeguard themselves in the event of a fire and other eventualities because they are well versed with the precautionary action they must take. For instance, they have rehearsed the evacuation procedures at regular intervals and know where the designated meeting place is.

Boarders are well informed about the school's complaints procedure and are very familiar with the concept of being able to contact helplines or an independent person through the helpline numbers that are displayed by payphones.

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

The leadership and management of boarding is outstanding because, although only a small part of the school's provision, the boarding community is at the very heart of the school and is valued for the important contribution it makes to the personal development of pupils. Senior managers demonstrate a strong commitment to sustaining and developing the boarding provision.

Excellent practice has been sustained since the last inspection in June 2013. Every element of boarding is thorough and well thought out. Systems, procedures and practices are very well established and implemented and are highly effective. The views of boarders are valued and instrumental in driving improvement. The majority of staff strongly agree that boarding is well managed.

The school is aware of its strengths and weaknesses because of rigorous systems of monitoring and self-evaluation across the different disciplines. Monitoring processes identify shortfalls and issues for discussion although reports of visits to the residential setting by the governors are not sufficiently evaluative of practice and do not comment on how practice conforms to national minimum standards and to school policies and procedures. This, however, has not impacted negatively for the service or on boarders because monitoring responsibilities are understood and are completed regularly and diligently by the head of care and across the disciplines.

Residential staff are highly experienced, well qualified, proficient and consistent in their role. They are committed and provide boarders with quality experiences which help them progress in all aspects of their development. Staff are supported in their role by the school's written policies, procedures and guidance. Some of the school's guidance is in the process of being reviewed and updated to be consistent with new guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE). Care staff are informed about current practice issues, such as child sexual exploitation and internet safety, as training is cascaded to staff by a lead member of staff. However, opportunities for external training are limited, partially by lack of availability.

The school's practices are transparent because the school's website and literature provides comprehensive information about the school's policies, procedures and practices to interested parties. As part of their induction into boarding, young people receive a special information pack which gives them a good understanding of how boarding operates.

The residential provision operates extremely effectively and smoothly. Staff are well established in their role and this contributes to a stable and consistent environment within which pupils are able to relax and to feel safe. Responsibilities are clearly delegated and residential staff are a cohesive team who are dedicated and work consistently for the benefit of boarders.

Residential staff are very well supported in their role both formally and informally. This results in a work force which is highly motivated and committed. All staff agree that they are proud to work in the school. Close working relationships with parents, external professionals and across the different school disciplines enables the residential staff to be highly effective in addressing the needs of individuals and in supporting the on-going work with pupils.

## 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>             | 126546   |
| <b>Social care unique reference number</b> | SC039099 |
| <b>DfE registration number</b>             | 865/7002 |

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      |
| <b>Number of boarders on roll</b>           | 16              |
| <b>Gender of boarders</b>                   | Mixed           |
| <b>Age range of boarders</b>                | 11 to 16        |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                          | Ingrid Sidmouth |
| <b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b> | 17/06/2013      |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                     | 01380 850309    |

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