

# Woolton High School

Woolton Hill Road, LIVERPOOL, L25 6JA

<b>Inspection dates</b>	26/06/2014	
<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 outstanding. This is because residential pupils receive a consistently high standard of care which fully meets and often exceeds the national minimum standards. Areas for improvement raised at the last inspection have been positively addressed.
- Feedback from residential pupils, their parents and professionals is consistently positive. Residential pupils used words like 'excellent' and 'superb' to describe their time spent in the house, while parents and social workers strongly agreed that spending time in the residential setting has contributed to improving their children's lives.
- Residential pupils make excellent progress as a result of staying in the residential provision. They benefit from strong and nurturing relationships with staff and a culture of openness, mutual respect and tolerance is evident between pupils.
- Residential pupils are strong ambassadors for the school and show an immense amount of respect for their residential community. They say they enjoy their stay and were keen to share stories of success with the inspector.
- The safety of residential pupils is paramount. All aspects of care practice are underpinned by robust and effective systems and procedures that are consistently applied to promote pupil welfare. This extends to staff recruitment, bullying and behaviour management, that are effectively managed to levels where residential pupils feel safe and are protected from harm.
- The quality of direction from the head of care and the school leadership team generally is exceptionally strong. Staff are well supported in their role and have a genuine commitment to helping pupils overcome the challenges they face in their lives.
- Some areas for improvement have been identified. These are in relation to further improving the rigour of fire drills, updating the residential pupils welcome guide to include information about how to make a complaint and improving the quality of the

information in the school governors monitoring reports.

### **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

### Inspection team

Paul Scott

Lead social care inspector

# **Full report**

## **Information about this school**

Woolton High School is a local authority maintained residential special school for up to 50 male pupils in academic years 9-11, all of whom have a statement for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). Use of the residential service is optional for pupils who have a choice of either boarding or extended days. The residential buildings can provide accommodation for 32 residential pupils, split between three houses. The school residential service currently accesses only one of the eight bed houses and the remaining accommodation is leased to various organisations for business purposes.

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

- further improve the procedures for practicing fire drills, in particular that fire drills are carried out at random times and that records accurately reflect the times these drills are undertaken
- improve the quality of the school governors records to ensure they accurately reflect the level of scrutiny applied in relation to staff practice
- update the children's welcome guide to include information about how to make a complaint.

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

### Outstanding

Pupils benefit immensely from spending time in the residential house and outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. They choose the amount of time they want to spend in the house with the majority of pupils only staying for tea and activities. A small number of pupils choose to stay overnight. Staff make exceptionally good use of the time pupils spend in residence, providing them with planned care and intensive support. This helps pupils to overcome significant barriers which in the past have hindered their social, emotional and academic progress. One relative said, 'Spending time in the house has helped (name) immensely. He is much better behaved, confident and more independent and is now enthusiastic about his education and his future.'

Relationships between residential pupils and staff are a major strength. Staff are skilled at getting to know residential pupils and developing strong and meaningful relationships from the point of inception to the school. Residential pupils are at ease with staff and could be observed engaging in positive interactions and playful banter throughout the inspection. Spending time in residential is seen as a privilege and pupils show a strong affiliation to their residential environment, attributing many aspects of their progress to the support they receive from residential staff. For example, a number of pupils spoke about an improved attitude towards school and better relationships with their families and peers.

The views and opinions of residential pupils are integral to all aspects of care planning and care practice. This starts from pupils having a choice about whether they stay beyond the end of the school day and includes choosing what activities they do and the meals they eat. They are given ample opportunities to contribute to the development of the residential community through regular discussions with staff and formal half-termly meetings with their keyworkers. As a result, residential pupils show a great deal of investment in their school community and say they feel listened to and valued and respected as individuals.

Staff work in partnership with parents and carers who retain primary responsibility for their child's health. This ensures continuity of care because staff are fully aware of residential pupils current health needs including dietary requirements, illnesses or medication. Staff provide residential pupils with age-appropriate guidance about health related issues including the importance of eating a nutritional diet, taking regular exercise and the risks associated with smoking, for example. This means residential pupils develop an understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and are suitably equipped to make healthy lifestyle choices.

Residential pupils enjoy a wide range of constructive recreational activities. All residential pupils spoke enthusiastically about activities that they find stimulating, interesting and fun. These include school based activities such as playing board games, using the computer, watching DVD's and playing football in the gymnasium, as well visiting the local swimming baths, parks and the seaside for example. These opportunities positively enhance personal growth and social development which is an integral part of the residential experience.

There are good opportunities for residential pupils to develop confidence and life skills when in the residential setting. For example, pupils will regularly help with the shopping, take responsibility for preparing their own supper and breakfast, set and clear the dining table and recognise what items to pack in their overnight bag. Residential and school staff work closely with external agencies and parents to ensure all pupils have appropriate support in their transitional year of school. This extends to gaining accredited achievement awards and accessing work experience opportunities. These opportunities help set a solid platform for moving on and making a successful transition to independence and adult life. One ex-pupil said, 'if it wasn't for my time

in residential I would not be doing so well. Staff helped me a lot and as a result I have finished my first year at college where I am training to work in health and social care.'

## **Quality of residential provision and care**

## **Outstanding**

The quality of residential care is outstanding. Staff are acutely aware of the anxieties caused by being away from home. Introduction and induction to the residential provision is sensitively managed at a pace suited to each individual pupil and their families. Initially, pupils are encouraged to spend time in the residential house as part of an extended school day, building up to overnight stays when and if they are ready. Staff work closely with parents to ensure each pupil gets the right amount of support to relieve potential stress and worry. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the number of pupils who view spending time in the residential house as both beneficial and a privilege.

There are strong links between care and education staff. There are regular opportunities to share information and a number of education support staff work shifts in residential time, strengthening these links further. This provides residential pupils with continuity of care, stability, support and varied learning opportunities which take account of their personal needs and interests. Staff have high aspirations for all pupils and every opportunity is taken to reinforce positive actions and celebrate pupil achievement, no matter how small. This is formally brought together on a weekly basis when individual achievement and progress is publically celebrated. This is an excellent opportunity for pupils and staff to share their achievements and serves as a good vehicle to improve self-esteem and self-worth.

Residential pupils benefit from being cared for by staff who give their individual needs the highest priority. All aspects of care planning and care practice recognise pupils as individuals with their own set of diverse and unique needs. These needs are detailed in care plans and risk assessments that are routinely monitored, reviewed and updated. Parents and professionals contribute fully to all aspects of care planning. Residential pupils are frequently involved in discussing their plans and the progress they are making. As a result, pupils can demonstrate a good insight into how they are cared for and the benefits of spending time in the residential setting. All residential pupils spoken to during the inspection could give examples of how their lives had improved since being at the school generally, but more specifically as a result of spending time in residence.

Care staff promote residential pupils good health and support them to lead a healthy lifestyle. The school works closely with parents to ensure they have regular health checks and attend any medical appointments.

Designated health practitioners visit the school on a regular basis providing pupils with advice, guidance and support. The procedures for accurately administering medication are robust and these practices ensure residential pupils receive their prescribed medication safely. There are good arrangements for when a pupil is unwell or have an accident so that parents can be reassured their child's health is closely monitored until their child goes home.

Meals provided by the school are nutritious, of good quality with plenty of choice. Menus take account of pupils likes and dislikes and specific dietary needs are catered for where required. Mealtimes are social occasions where residential pupils are encouraged to sit together and chat with staff and peers. This results in a pleasant, purposeful and relaxed atmosphere that promotes a culture of respect and tolerance.

Residential pupils benefit from spending time in a suitably designed and very comfortable house. The house is clean, tidy and well maintained. Pupils are keen to show visitors around and are clearly proud of the residential setting, which is decorated in a very child-friendly manner.

## **Residential pupils' safety**

## **Outstanding**

The school has outstanding arrangements for keeping residential pupils safe at all times. Policies and procedures are robust and are consistently followed, including safeguarding referrals, management of allegations and recruitment of staff. Links with external safeguarding professionals are extremely strong with the headteacher and head of care sitting on various local authority safeguarding sub-groups. This further enhances strong links with external safeguarding professionals to ensure processes for managing and reporting concerns are rigorous and transparent.

Pupil safety is at the heart of school's everyday practice. There is an exceptionally high level of child protection and safeguarding expertise amongst the management team and staff are well trained and supported in fulfilling their obligations to keep residential pupils safe. Staff have an excellent understanding of young people's individual risks and vulnerabilities, which are fully recorded in their individual files. A proportionate and inclusive approach is taken to managing pupils that may present a risk to others. This inclusive approach ensures risk is effectively managed without having to exclude certain individuals from accessing the residential setting.

The school maintains good anti-bullying practices. Staff effectively manage the environment and group dynamics which helps to ensure bullying, such as name calling, is promptly addressed in a supportive manner with those involved. Staff are aware of the potential for bullying and the impact bullying can have on pupils welfare. They work hard to foster a culture of openness within the residential setting, encouraging pupils to share their feelings and discuss any concerns they may have. Processes for raising concerns are good and all residential pupils said they could confidently approach at least one member of staff if they have any concerns, and feel they will be taken seriously. Residential pupils confirm that they feel safe and well protected and no concerns were raised throughout the inspection.

Residential pupils talk openly about how the school has helped them to learn how to control their behaviour. A key to this success comes from the clear and consistently applied boundaries, their relationships with staff and the use of the schools reward systems, which are strong motivators to helping them modify their behaviour. Staff have a good understanding of the factors that contribute to pupils becoming angry and upset and are skilled at intervening early and diffusing difficult situations and incidents. They encourage pupils to reflect on their behaviour, enabling them to develop coping strategies and learn how to self-manage their personal circumstances. One pupil spoke about how when he gets angry he now takes himself off to the quiet room where he can sit in the dark and stare at the glowing stars that are stuck on the wall. He said, 'this gives him time to think and helps him calm down.' The effectiveness of this non-confrontational approach is evident in the extremely low number of sanctions and physical restraints that occur in the residential house because pupils take an increasing responsibility for their actions.

A robust approach is taken to ensure health and safety remains a central element to keeping residential pupils safe and protected. Residential pupils are protected from hazards by a comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures, risk assessments and routine maintenance checks to ensure the premises are safe. Fire drills are now undertaken monthly to ensure residential pupils and staff know how to safely evacuate the house in the event of a fire. However, there is no variation in the times that these drills are practiced and there are a number of gaps in the evacuation records.

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

Leadership and management of the residential provision is outstanding and all national minimum standards are met. The school is professionally and efficiently run by an experienced, qualified

and knowledgeable management team who are extremely child-focused and committed to ensuring pupils needs are met. Cohesive links between education and care promote continuity and enhance young people's holistic school experience. This ensures routines and procedures are clear, well-established and operate consistently to provide an orderly and safe school and residential community.

Managers see the residential provision as an integral part of providing pupils with strong foundations where social and emotional development can start to grow. They work hard to reduce barriers so that each pupil makes as much progress as possible, relative to their individual starting points. This includes how practices from care improve school attendance and academic achievement. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the excellent social, emotional and academic progress residential pupils make at the school.

The head of care is extremely competent and is highly effective in her management role. She demonstrates a passionate commitment to making a difference to pupils lives through sustained improvement. The three areas for improvement identified at the last inspection, in November 2013, have been suitably addressed. Fire drills are now regularly practiced, residential pupils individual risk is clearly identified in their missing from care risk assessments and policies and documents are clearly date marked when they are reviewed. These improvements have further enhanced the standard of care and safety for residential pupils.

Residential pupils benefit from being cared for by a small, dedicated and stable staff team who consistently have their best interest's at heart. Residential staff have an excellent understanding of each pupils specific needs and ensure issues of equality and diversity are well managed and potential barriers to progress are reduced. Morale is very high with all team members who demonstrate a great deal of pride and enthusiasm for their work. They consider themselves to be well supported in their duties, receive regular quality supervision and have good access to relevant training opportunities. Daily handovers and team meetings are effectively utilised to share pertinent information, discuss pupil progress and shape practice. This results in a highly effective and competent team who have the right skills and attributes to meet the needs of pupils in their care.

Effective monitoring processes are used to ensure the operation of the residential provision is of a consistently high standard and that there is a clear focus on continuous improvement. This is further supplemented by regular visits by the school governors who cast a critical eye on all aspects of the schools operation, including checking records, reviewing incidents and checking the physical condition of the buildings. Reports are collated following each visit and when shortfalls are identified swift action is taken to address these. However, some elements of these reports do not contain sufficient detail to evidence the depth of scrutiny applied by the visitor.

There have been no complaints since the last inspection. Systems for dealing with complaints are fair and transparent. Good information about how to raise concerns is available to pupils, parents and professionals. This includes displays in the school and residential setting, on the school website and in the Statement of Purpose. However, this information is not available in the welcome guide, which is given to all residential pupils at the start of their residential placement and serves as a primary source of information for them.

All required policies and procedures are in place and are known to those required to implement them. Records and documentation are generally comprehensive, up to date and reflect each residential pupils needs, progress and areas for development.



## 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>	104739
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC040728
<b>DfE registration number</b>	341/7039

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>	
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Boys
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	11 to 16
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr M.E. Christian
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	06/11/2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 233 8650
<b>Email address</b>	M.christian@wooltonhigh.liverpool.sch.uk

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