

# The New School at West Heath

The New School at West Heath, Ashgrove Road, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 1SR

<b>Inspection dates</b>	02/12/2014 to 04/12/2014	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	Good	2
Quality of residential provision and care	Good	2
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is good because

- The school is good at communicating with parents. One parent said, 'the school is very open to communication they are very good at that brilliant!'
- The quality of relationships between residential staff and students is a strength of the service. They share a common understanding of the culture of the school and the development of respect and appreciation of individuals. Staff and students have a high opinion of the school and the impact it has on the development of the students. One student said, 'It is a very, very good school. it is a brilliant place.'
- Students make good progress but outcome measures are not effectively used to evidence this progress. In particular care plans and risk assessments are not efficiently used to accumulate evidence of progress.
- Key policies on safeguarding, complaints and recruitment are regularly reviewed and were undergoing expansion and immediate review to improve their commentary on the most current guidance from the Department of Education.
- The residential setting is an integral part of the management structure of the whole school. It has a well developed self assessment process. It has a development plan which contains plans for the improvement of houses and development of the residential service.
- Standards are monitored by regular independent visits and visits from trustees. The trustees are dynamic and fully engaged in the safeguarding of students.
- The deputy principal maintains excellent links with the local safeguarding board and in particular the education team. He is positive and proactive in alerting the team to issues of concern and using them to monitor thresholds for referrals about these matters. Some internal investigations have not been recorded in a manner which is readily open to external scrutiny or to act as a reference point for future learning.

## **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

Prior to the inspection contact was made with the local safeguarding team. The school were notified of the inspection at 09:05 on 2 December 2014, the inspector met with the principal, deputy and learning director at 12:45. During the inspection meetings were held with: senior staff; students; an individual student; residential staff; chair of trustees; independent visitor; and those with responsibility for: medication; food preparation; training; incidents monitoring; safeguarding, complaints and disciplinary matters; health and safety; and the administration of recruitment records. Tours were made of seven residential houses; kitchens; and meals and activities were joined in with the students.

## Inspection team

Angus Mackay

Lead social care inspector

# **Full report**

## **Information about this school**

This is an independent co-educational residential special school situated in Kent. The school provides places for 121 day and boarding pupils between the ages of 10 to 18 years of age. At the time of the inspection there were 23 students residing at the school, Monday to Friday. Many of the pupils have experienced various forms of trauma in their lives including bullying, bereavement, illness and abuse, and this has often led to the breakdown of a mainstream school placement. Specific conditions including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and Asperger's syndrome are present in many pupils and most have a statement of special educational need. The school has seven boarding houses. The residential provision was last inspected in December 2013.

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

- improve the quality of care plans and risk assessments to aid the gathering of outcome measures.
- ensure that the statement of purpose is more explicit in explaining the approach in working with students.
- ensure all policies and procedures are current and reflect the most recent guidance and regulations.
- ensure that resolution of investigations is fully recorded.

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

### Good

The outcomes for students in the residential setting are good. Students in this setting achieve improved academic outcomes compared to day students. They join in evening activities and clubs which enhance their learning opportunities and make learning fun. In addition they engage in discussions with staff about education, seeking assistance with homework tasks and school problems. Residential students benefit from the residential experience and improve their academic attainment and involvement because of it.

Students enjoy a lot of freedom and control over their time in the residential setting. They are clear that they have to earn this freedom and are aware it is risk assessed and monitored. One student said 'I like it here because we control how our house is run. It is not like school here, we are treated like adults. We can organise our own time and visit friends around the site.' Students gain responsibility and improve time management through these monitored movements.

Students develop friendships in the boarding setting and use the freedom of movement to interact as they would do at home. Some students make significant progress in personal relationships and friendships where they had previously struggled. One student said, 'I have made a lot of progress here. When I first came I could not interact with anyone I was unable to talk to no one I now have friends and have gained in confidence and self-esteem.' Many students have struggled in relationship forming and have made progress in developing and maintaining friendships. One parent said, 'he has a friend he met there. This is the first he has ever had, the first friendship of any sort.' Students develop confidence and self-esteem through developing relationship skills.

Students are involved in discussions about their care, activities food and other matters about their residential experience. They contribute to their care plans, with some students making detailed comments about all aspects of their care. They attend their reviews and comment on their care and education plans. In the house they help to set the menu and make suggestions about how the service can be improved. Some students do this through keyworking sessions, others via the school council. Importantly this engagement has positive outcomes and has resulted in real changes. The most significant change was a request for a female boarding house which was successful. Students learn how to make decisions and how to influence and negotiate. They gain in confidence, improve their speech and increase their self-esteem.

All students have domestic tasks about the house. They learn simple skills such as setting and clearing tables and looking after their own space. Some students have basic preparation for independence programmes including budgeting, shopping and cooking. Students make some progress in this but some admit they do not achieve as much as they should despite assistance and encouragement from staff. Students are motivated by rewards and achievements so staff are developing an accredited course for them to give structured feedback on their progression in developing independence skills. Students make mixed progress currently in developing these skills.

Staff and students are looking to improve care plan and risk assessment targets to aid them in tracking progress. Students currently help to set some of their residential targets which are monitored on a weekly basis. Students have graphical displays of their success in achieving targets which are linked to monetary awards. Keyworkers and students review their success in their meetings but have not successfully adjusted targets and recorded outcomes to evidence this progress.

The quality of the residential provision and care is good. Most of the houses are well decorated and maintained. They have a warm domestic feel and students regard them as a safe home. Some houses require some upgrading and the school has identified a significant budget for the redevelopment of these settings. One house in particular was not to the generally high standard with marked walls and doors. Students can personalise their rooms and have a key to their room encouraging their ownership and investment in their own space.

Students have healthy nutritious meals throughout the day. Meals in school are prepared in a central kitchen which has good standards of hygiene, food preparation and storage. Individual allergies and medical conditions are safely managed by kitchen staff working closely with school staff. During the evenings meals are prepared in the individual houses. Special occasions are celebrated and during the inspection one student had a birthday party which students and staff from other houses attended. The party was a warm and joyful celebration. Students are involved in setting menus and in food purchasing. Some will do cooking although others said that they rely on staff to do this. Despite having a diverse student population the menu does not reflect this diversity. Students are clear that they enjoy the meals provided.

The students actively enjoy a wide range of activities. Following consultation with them staff have established an after schools clubs network enhancing their education and entertainment. Within this programme there is an imaginative use of music to help students to explore their cultural and family backgrounds. There is a strong focus on engaging students in community based activities enhancing their social skills and confidence in the wider community.

The school encourages a respect agenda and students can earn awards for achieving targets on individual programmes. Relationships with staff are good and evidence this mutual respect. One student said, 'Staff are very friendly. I would not say kind because that implies they give you gifts. They are like friends.' Another student remarked on the assistance staff provide saying, 'the staff here are really kind. I like them all. They do key worker sessions with me and help me with my problems. I feel safe here.'

Health care is good. Students are encouraged to enhance their healthy diet with exercise. All students have health care plans which are monitored by the school nurse. Programmes on specific health issues such as sexual health are run in school but supported by keyworking sessions in the evenings. The school works effectively with other health professionals in particular specialist mental health services for those students with more complex needs. Students are positively involved in managing their own medication wherever possible and act as joint signatories to the issuing of any medication. Where students have specific health care needs, which require assistance in administering medication, staff receive appropriate training. For example in the use of an epipen. The school has a no smoking policy and has adjusted programmes and sanctions to encourage students to give up smoking. Smoking cessation assistance is available and staff provide support and encouragement to students to achieve this important change. The recording of controlled drugs was being done on loose leaf sheets but the nurse changed this to a bound log book during the inspection, in line with best practice. Students learn how to manage their health conditions and how to maintain a safe and healthy lifestyle.

Students have detailed statements of educational need but staff have developed care plans to outline how they will meet targets. The care plans incorporate, health care plans and risk assessments. Some care plan targets lack sufficient detail or regular review and adjustment, reducing their effectiveness in tracking students' progress and outcomes.

The residential student's safety is good. Inspectors were aware during this inspection that serious allegations of a child protection nature were being investigated by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the school in response to the allegations(s) were considered (where appropriate) alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors judgements.

The school takes a proactive approach to safeguarding issues and makes good use of contacts within the local authority safeguarding in education team. The safeguarding team praise the use made of the service by the deputy principal describing him as proactive and always on the front foot in consulting about safeguarding issues. The school maintains good records of all safeguarding concerns and individual actions taken. On occasions the recording of some investigations or supports has not been sufficiently comprehensive to allow external scrutiny or to act as a reference point for future learning. This reduces the school's ability to learn effectively from these situations.

The school maintain a regular updating of policies and procedures and the revised safeguarding policy is in the process of being ratified by the schools trustees. This regular reviewing ensures that policies reflect or comment on the most current guidance.

Behaviour management is good, using positive systems and rewards. The school learns from incidents and has used the analysis of these to identify hot spots in the setting. Imaginative use of this information has led to a reduction in incidents. For example meal times have been adjusted and activities varied to successfully address a peak in incidents during lunch time. Positive interaction between staff and students in the residential setting, and skilled use of training in de-escalation techniques, has resulted in there being no physical interventions for nine months. Students make progress in managing their own behaviour with this staff support. Sanctions have not been so effectively managed and on occasions the same sanction was repeatedly used for a behaviour, such as smoking, with no improvement noted. The residential setting commenced analysing sanctions during the inspection and immediately identified unsuccessful sanctions which they could address. Currently sanctions have a reduced impact on some behaviours.

Students mainly reported that they feel safe in the residential setting. One student said, 'I only feel safe here in boarding, I wish I could be here all of the time.' Some say that there is bullying but all agree that the school takes an active approach to it. Care plans have risk assessments which include some protective measures. The risk assessments have improved since the last inspection but still lack sufficient detail, outcome measures and any regularly recorded review. Consequently a detailed analysis of the progress students are making in risk reduction is not available.

Staff recruitment procedures and recording are efficiently applied and all appropriate checks are recorded on the single central record. The recording of telephone checks of references was confusing and was modified during the inspection. Records are appropriately maintained for adults living on site but not employed by the school. The recruitment policy had not been updated in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education and was originally due to be reviewed in one year. The school have expedited this review to ensure the policy reflects the most current guidance. The policy does include a briefing note which ensures that managers are aware of the changes to guidance.

Health and safety management is positive with regular checking of all equipment and effective monitoring of potential hazards. Site security is good and all visitors are appropriately supervised. External groups using school facilities are all subject to disclosure and barring checks and

restricted movement around the site to ensure students safety. The school has regular fire drills and checks of detection and firefighting equipment. The school maintains a safe environment for students.

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

The leadership and management of the residential provision are good. The senior managers in the residential setting are appropriately qualified and experienced. The school has good succession planning and supports staff in gaining advance qualifications including social work degrees. The residential setting is fully integrated into the running of the school through the active engagement of the senior staff in the school senior leadership team.

The residential setting is included in the whole school development plan but also has a dedicated development plan supervised by the senior residential staff. The deputy principal maintains a self-assessment of the service ensuring compliance of the houses with all national minimum standards. The development plan has set key priorities for the development of the service incorporating feedback from students and the independent visitor. Students feel involved in the development of the houses through this engagement.

The school benefits from a highly active and involved board of trustees. They work closely with the residential homes and have a good understanding of the areas for development. Members of the trustees visit regularly and have appointed independent visitors to visit and monitor the conduct of the school. The independent visitors are well advertised around the residential setting and all students have received letters and photographs introducing the visitors. Reports are submitted to the trustees and a response is given back to the visitors by the learning director before the next visit. Reports are detailed and challenging and identified many of the areas for development noted in this inspection. One visitor said, 'I am very impressed with the school and the progress they are making. There is a lot of emotional literacy in the staff team.'

The school has a statement of purpose which describes the service and facilities but lacks detail on the actual approach adopted. Senior managers had identified this as an area for development and are currently modifying the statement. The school has a well monitored timetable for reviewing policies and procedures. Some require expansion to ensure they match current guidelines in particular including reference to Keeping Children Safe in Education 2014. The deputy principal had briefed staff on this guidance ensuring safe recruitment practice is maintained. Policies on the school web site were not current and did not reflect the practice in the school. This was rectified during the inspection.

Parents comment positively on communication from the school one parent saying, 'Communication is really good, I can contact them at whim. I know all of his carers and talk to the nurse regularly. I speak to the manager at least once a week, this week three times.' Students confirm that they have a voice in the running of the school particularly through the school council. Residential students have an active voice in the council but can also effect change with support from their keyworkers. A significant change students recently achieved was the introduction of Wi-Fi.



## 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>	131611
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC024063
<b>DfE registration number</b>	886/6079

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>	
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	23
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	12 to 18
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Christina Wells
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	11/12/2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01732 460 553
<b>Email address</b>	principal@westheathschool.com;

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