

Pontville Residential School

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

Inspection dates 20/01/2015 to 22/01/2015

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 flourish in a caring, nurturing environment. They continue to make excellent progress in managing their own behaviour and are making significant strides in their quest for independence. Residential pupils feel valued as staff listen to them and respond to their requests.
- Residential pupils' safety and well-being is of paramount importance. Residential pupils are safe and say that they feel safe because of the exceptionally well-implemented safeguarding procedures. Dynamic risk assessments enable residential pupils to take safe risks and learn from these.
- The residential provision is exceptionally well managed by a highly committed and dedicated staff team. It is highly valued by senior managers and governors and is an integral part of the school. Monitoring of the service is robust and helps drive forward development.
- Equality and diversity is threaded through all aspects of practice, including ensuring that residential pupils have a strong voice in their school community.
- Parents, carers and residential pupils are complimentary about the school. Young people say they 'love it'. Parents comment on the excellent progress young people are making. They say it has made a huge difference to their child for having a 'great member of staff and friend' in their life.

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, care staff and school staff 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 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- enhance further the recording systems with regards to the recording of some medical conditions in health care plans and the full date is recorded in all records.
- enhance further the communal areas, bedrooms and lounge areas in Elmwood.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

The outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Residential pupils enjoy high quality relationships with their peers and staff. These are built upon honesty, trust and mutual respect. They thoroughly enjoy one another's company. They are tolerant of each other's personalities and clearly understand that everyone has different needs. Residential pupils say they 'love it' here.

They succeed as they live in a highly inclusive setting where their individuality is recognised, supported and celebrated. As a result, residential pupils make excellent progress across all areas of their personal, social and emotional development. Residential pupils are able to access an extensive range of services and therapies to help them to overcome any difficulties they may be facing. As a consequence they have much more confidence in their own abilities and increased self-esteem.

A key strength of the setting is the emphasis placed on enabling young people to become as independent as they can in line with their starting point and disability. As a result young people are flourishing, they thoroughly enjoy going to college and spending time with their friends. This has resulted in some young people choosing not to move back to their home area, but to find a flat close to their college and friends. Parents and staff acknowledge this is a massive achievement for these young people.

Residential pupils are exceptionally well supported during their transition into adulthood. Staff go out of their way to ensure young people have suitable living accommodation and effectively support them in sourcing furniture and setting up accounts to pay their bills. This excellent support provides young people with the best possible start to the next chapter in their lives.

The excellent use of pictorial cards around the units effectively supports residential pupil's independence. Residential pupils effectively use these prompts to locate resources rather than having to ask the staff all the time. Staff devised smaller, wallet sized pictorial prompts for some young people so that they can access these discreetly while in the community. This means young people are able to get the reassurances they need when they need it.

Residential pupils are confident to undertake a range of household tasks, such as doing their laundry using their colour coded products and preparing meals and snacks with staff. A number of young people are pleased that they are able to travel independently to clubs and colleges.

Residential pupil's voices are intrinsic to everything the school does. They feel empowered, valued and respected as they know their views are listened to and acted upon. They develop the skills required for successful relationships by learning about and practising social communication such as seeking the views of others, or taking turns in a conversation. Staff expertly encourage all residential pupils to have their say in the running of the residence. For example, organising the jobs rota, planning the menus and negotiating when they will do the dishes.

Residential pupils are much more able to manage challenging or difficult situations. For some this means they are now able to redirect their anger and frustrations from a person to an object. On reflection they confidently explain to staff that this was still not a good thing to do, but they felt it was a better option at that time.

Residential pupils enjoy keeping themselves fit and healthy. They have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy eating. They enjoy taking part in an extensive range of sports activities on site and in the local community. The school is rightly proud that some

pupils have been on overseas trips with their team to play in a football tournament.

They clearly understand that on occasion they may need to take medication to support their health needs. Some residential pupils are confident to administer their own medication. They are confident to ask to see a medical practitioner when they are feeling unwell. Staff reinforce social life skills work from school about sexual health, or the dangers of alcohol misuse, so that residential pupils can increase their awareness of how to make positive, safe and healthy choices.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of pastoral care and support is exceptional. An excellent whole school approach is effectively implemented. This successfully identifies and meets the social, emotional and physical needs of residential pupils. The underpinning approaches used by the school, such as proactive behaviour support and enhanced communication structures, are firmly embedded within the residential service. This means residential pupils are provided with a continuity of care that is tailored to their specific needs. Consequently residential pupils thrive in the care and nurturing environment. A parent wrote, 'X is their second home and this is because of the staff. The staff have patience with them and have taught them things I could not.'

The school recently secured the accreditation with the National Autistic Society (NAS). They say, 'care practice at the school is outstanding in all areas; this was particularly evident in the residence. There is a sense of absolute respect and genuine concern between the residential staff and pupils. The homely environment of the living units and the continuation of work targets ensure the school is truly implementing a 24 hour curriculum with its young residents.'

Teaching staff and members of the speech and language team also provide support in the residence. They say this is an 'extremely valuable' opportunity for them because they have the opportunities to see the young people in a different setting. As a result they feel they have a greater understanding of the young people, their personalities and vulnerabilities. They are then able to further adapt what they are doing in school to support the young person.

Key workers provide clear, prioritised and effectively reviewed plans of care, to support individual growth and development. Residential pupils participate in assessing the progress they have made, and in identifying goals and targets for future success. For example, enhancing their oral hygiene and preparing meals. Together with staff and their family, they devise careful prompts and routines that maximise individual opportunities for achievement and progress.

Highly effective health care arrangements are in place. Residential pupil's health care plans are generally comprehensive, and provide insight in to young people's medical needs. On a small number of occasions it is not clear as to why a residential pupil may need a specific medication. This is a recording issue and the impact of this is negligible, because of the staff's innate understanding of each young person's specific needs. The school took immediate steps to rectify this shortfall during the inspection.

The arrangements for administering medication are robust and ensure that residential pupils receive their medication at the right time. All staff are trained in the administration of medication and emergency medication. Staff are committed to enabling young people where possible to self-administer their medication and to take responsibility for this. Highly effective support is provided to residential pupil's intimate care needs. This means young people's privacy and dignity is respected at all times.

Excellent support is provided to residential pupils to help them complete their homework and to build upon the skills they have learnt in school. While some young people may not appreciate that they have to do their homework, this is completed in a supportive environment. Residential

pupils enjoy the opportunities to spend time with staff and thoroughly enjoy engaging with visitors. They think it is hilarious that staff and visitors cannot guess who the baby pictures are of.

Residential pupils enjoy a wide range of healthy meals and snacks. All of which are prepared in line with their specific dietary and religious needs. Residential pupils are actively encouraged to try new foods to extend their dietary repertoire and are fully involved in the food preparation. Some young people are becoming confident bakers and enjoy the opportunities to make a piñata cake with staff.

Staff have very positive relationship with parents and carers. They talk to them on a regular basis and keep in touch with them when their child is not in attendance. This means staff are able to have meaningful conversations with parents and are confident to discuss sensitive issues with them.

The accommodation provided is spacious and comfortable, and reflects the individual personalities and tastes of those who use it. One of the residential units has currently undergone a refurbishment of the bedrooms areas, which the young people 'love'. This has highlighted the disparity in the quality of the two units. Work is planned for later in the year to address this. In the meantime the lounge, bedroom and communal areas in the Elmwood unit are starting to look tired.

There is sufficient diversity of accommodation, within the residential units within the school buildings, to enable staff to match the changing needs of residential pupils. This means that they benefit from safe and secure placements that are sufficiently flexible to ensure they continue to progress in skills and independence.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

The safety and well-being of residential pupils is outstanding. This is because of the staff's excellent understanding of the safeguarding procedures. All staff are suitably trained in child protection. They are fully aware of the residential pupils' diverse needs and behaviours and how these may impact upon them.

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.

Residential pupils do not go missing. Staff are very clear on the procedures to be implemented should this occur. Residential pupils' safety is enshrined in everyday practice. Staff use dynamic and progressive risk assessment of the needs and vulnerabilities of the residential pupils. Staff help them to identify individual areas of development, and create effective strategies that help young people make the right choice. In this way, they learn and practice self-determination and emotional regulation that underpins the significant progress they make in keeping themselves safe.

Residential pupils are very aware of the dangers of cyber-bullying, and are developing an understanding of what appropriate relationships and interactions look and feel like. This is because staff promote positive and helpful interactions between them. Residential pupils have high expectations of feeling safe and comfortable when they stay at school, and understand the part they play in maintaining positive and helpful relationships.

Positive behaviour is effectively and consistently promoted. Staff are highly skilled in de-escalation techniques, which are implemented extremely well in practice. This is supported by the staff's innate understanding of each young person, their vulnerabilities and how these impact

upon their behaviour. The use of consequences are minimal and the need for physical interventions in residence very rare. Staff are vigilant and respond quickly and effectively to residential pupils' ever-changing needs.

Staff deflate situations effectively, by using their body language or by simply talking quietly to residential pupils. This effectively avoids the behaviour escalating and provides residential pupils with the opportunities to think about what that are doing and come to a more appropriate alternative, such as going to their room to relax. The effectiveness of these strategies and staffs skills are acknowledged by NAS who say this is an area of 'considerable strength'. They commend staff's 'superb' ability to manage and diffuse volatile situations.

A comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks protects residential pupils. Regular fire drills ensure residential pupils know what to do in an emergency. Robust systems are in place for the safe recruitment of staff, which assesses their suitability to work with young people. Visitors are monitored and effectively chaperoned. Residential pupils are provided with excellent level of supervision based on their age, understanding and ability, to make sure they are safe in school and in the community.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding

The leadership and management is outstanding. The residential provision is integral to the school and is fully encompassed into everything the school does. Highly insightful management by senior managers actively promotes a culture that ensures pupils are always listened to and respected as individuals. They are extremely committed to the on-going development of the school, for example, trialling a new systems with the night support officers and how the staff monitor residential pupil's progress. This is a clear example of how the school effectively listens to their staff and is willing to implement new ways of working.

Residential pupils are cared for by a highly committed and dedicated team of staff who are continually striving to further improve the outcomes for young people. The residential team has recently experienced a period of change due to staff changes. It is a credit to the staff that this has not had a detrimental effect upon the pupils. Staff willingly stepped into new roles and took on additional responsibilities to ensure the welfare and happiness of the residential pupils continued to be of paramount importance.

Thorough and effective systems for daily information exchange characterise staff commitment to integrated working. Handovers between parents, carers, school and the residence help staff to consider any emerging support needs for residential pupils, as well review appointments or visitors that may affect their welfare or emotional stability.

The extremely committed and enthusiastic head teacher and head of care inspire others to make a difference. This level of commitment means little goes unnoticed. This embodies the school's positive approach to ensuring every young person reaches their full potential and has fun doing so. Staff work extremely well as a team. They effectively create a culture where residential pupils' rights as individuals are respected and their differences are accepted. They receive regular professional supervision and meet regularly as a team to discuss how young people progress, and any emerging needs.

The comprehensive Statement of Purpose clearly outlines the aims and objectives of the school and residence. In addition, parents and residential pupils receive detailed information 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.

Records and documentation are very well maintained and allow for the uniqueness of each young

people to shine. Most records are dated correctly. On a number of occasions the date is recorded as the month and year. This does not provide a clear audit trail and may not provide ample clarity as to which is the current documentation. The school's development plan encapsulates the school's vision for the residential provision. For example, highlighting the need to refurbish Elmwood unit in line with Oakwood. Monitoring of the home is robust. The head of care has very positive relationships with the young people in his care. He maintains a close day-to-day overview of each young person individually, alongside the general running of the residence. Any shortfalls are promptly identified and addressed.

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	
Number of boarders on roll	
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	
Headteacher	Mrs E Riley
Date of previous boarding inspection	13/03/2014
Telephone number	01695 578734
Email address	Elaine.riley@witherslackgroup.co.uk

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