

The Ashley School Academy Trust

The Ashley School Academy Trust, Ashley Downs, LOWESTOFT, Suffolk, NR32 4EU

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| Inspection dates | 21/01/2015 | |
| 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

- The overall effectiveness of the residential provision continues to be outstanding. The positive impact on pupils' personal, social and emotional development is unquestionable. Pupils make optimum progress in all areas of their development.
- The safeguarding procedures are established and systematic. These are central to the school and comprehensively implemented by staff.
- Staff treat pupils as valued individuals. The excellent quality of care is inclusive and responsive in meeting the needs of each residential pupil.
- The views of parents are unanimous in their extremely high praise of the residential staff and impact of the school on pupil's lives.
- The school continues to improve, clear progress has been made since the last inspection. The staff share an ambitious vision for the future of the school.

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

This standalone inspection began four hours following announcement of the inspection. The inspection comprised of inspection of the residential provision, scrutiny of documents, discussion with staff, professionals and telephone calls with parents. The inspector met with pupils and parents. Practice was observed over two evenings within the residential setting. There were no recent surveys or Parent View survey responses to inform the inspection.

Inspection team

Deirdra Keating

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

The Ashley School Academy Trust is a maintained residential special school for 135 pupils of either gender aged between seven and 16 years. The school currently have 49 pupils who stay between one and three nights a week.

The residential accommodation is provided in two houses located on the school site. The school is situated in a residential area of Lowestoft and caters for pupils with moderate learning difficulties who have associated disabilities such as speech and language disorders, autism, and behaviour difficulties.

The residential provision was last inspected in February 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the dynamic variation of activities to consistently enthuse and stimulate pupils.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

The outcomes for residential students are outstanding. Residential pupils continue to thrive at the school. They feel emotionally secure and thoroughly enjoy a humorous rapport with staff. This enables them to develop self-confidence, self-expression and communication skills. For pupils who have limited social interactions this develops their interpersonal and social skills.

Pupils are exceptionally polite and hospitable. They know how to treat visitors and demonstrate patience and care towards one another. This generates an accepting and harmonious environment enabling all pupils to feel equally safe and valued. Staying in the residential provision provides pupils with valuable real life experiences that teaches pupils how to accept differences, respect one another and manage conflict.

Independence targets are bespoke to every pupil and identified by staff, pupils and parents. Targets build a range of skills ranging from personal hygiene and sorting laundry to using public transport. This builds pupil's confidence in their own ability and prepares them for independence.

Pupils learn about healthy life styles. They speak positively about healthy food options and how they have changed their meal time choices to include more fruit and fewer carbohydrates. Pupils benefit from many physical activities including walking, sporting games and swimming. Regular opportunities enable pupils to recognise their talents and learn new skills.

Pupil's views have been fully taken into account in the restructure of the activity programme. They contribute to décor, meal choices and making house rules. Pupils meet after school to plan the evening ahead and reflect on their day in school. They confidently contribute their views and feelings in the knowledge that staff and pupils value their ideas. This gives pupils an active voice in the residence.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of the residential provision and care is outstanding. Induction to the residential provision is planned in accordance with pupil and parent's preferences. Introduction is carefully tailored to pupil's individual confidence and ability. Pupils attend link evenings enjoying tea and activities with the established residential pupils. This enables pupils to interact with their peers and adjust to staying away from home.

The staff team make pupil's experience of the provision highly enjoyable and desirable. The quality of their interactions and responsiveness to pupil's individual requests are superb. Staff skilfully manage a number of competing demands while maintaining an inclusive environment in which all pupils are equally valued.

Care plans are clear, comprehensive and focussed. These guide staff in their care of pupils and evidence the benefit of the provision by measuring individual progress against defined targets. Placement plan reviews are held with parents and staff. These analyse how the provision meets pupil's needs and justify the positive benefits of the residential provision against pupil's progress.

Activities are usually exciting and linked to pupil's preferences and requests. Pupils benefit from using local leisure amenities, visiting the cinema, walking in local woods and shopping trips. The variation of activities sampled are stimulating and exciting, although during the inspection pupils were expected to collate worksheets that some pupils did not understand. This activity spanned several evenings. Pupil's complied and benefitted from the social interactions; despite this the activity had limited benefits and was generally lack lustre.

The catering arrangements at the school are superb. Food is beautifully presented; menus are varied and combine favourite options with healthy ingredients. The catering manager is adept at continual improvement of the catering service. Meals are increasingly light, nutritious and delicious. Innovative and child-friendly ideas have revolutionised food combinations and tempted pupils. These include hearty homemade soups, Fruity Friday and Spicy Tuesday theme days. Pupils benefit from better food combinations. This helps pupils to make healthy food choices that leave them feeling energised and positive about themselves.

The residential houses are comfortable and welcoming. New soft furnishings and accessories lift the interior resulting in accommodation that is clean, light and modern. Paintwork is fresh, pictures and photographs reflect pupil's individual choices. Pupils creatively contribute to décor and displays. The walls are adorned with pupil's work, photographs and positive messages. This promotes a bright and positive atmosphere giving pupils pride and a sense of belonging in the houses.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

Residential students' safety is outstanding. The recruitment systems in the school are robust and show selection of staff is meticulously carried out by experienced personnel staff. Systematic checking ensures that new staff are suitable and safe to work with pupils. New safe interview training will further strengthen the interview process.

Child protection is a key strength of the school. The local authority designated officer has confirmed that the school's child protection staff manage safeguarding issues competently. Staff work with a wide range of outside professionals to monitor pupil's welfare and well-being. The identification of pupil's in need of support is extremely good. Staff are highly vigilant and work unanimously to interpret the difficulties faced by some pupils. The identification of pupils needing support instigates planned interventions. Professionals spoken to describe the school as a safe haven and say it provides a stable and nurturing respite for some pupils. Staff are guided by the school's safeguarding policy. This reflects the particular needs of all residential pupils and is available on the school website. A summary version guides adults to safe and professional conduct when visiting the school.

Residential pupils spoken to unanimously say that they feel safe, included and valued. Pupils treat one another with respect and show kindness towards one another. Subsequently there are no bullying incidents in the residential provision. Parents reiterate this and say unreservedly that pupils feel safe at the school and that they have every confidence in the school to keep them safe.

There are no instances of pupils going missing from the school and none for a significant period of time. Joint procedures and risk assessments outline the agreed actions to take in the event of this happening. An assessment of the local area is being undertaken by the school. This is a proactive response to keeping pupil's safe and understanding the risks within the locality. Calculation of risk works well and is used systematically. Activity risk assessments provide a comprehensive evaluation of pupil's needs and analysis of their ability to participate in different activities. This offers pupils who may not benefit from varied activities, new experiences and equality of opportunity.

The environment is safe and managed well to ensure pupil's safety. Regularly service checks identify deficiencies which are always addressed by registered service engineers. Security of the school has improved with an electronic signing in system. Houses are locked preventing unauthorised entry. The senior member of staff on duty each evening registers pupils in. This

ensures that in the event of an emergency all pupils can be accounted for.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding

Leadership and management of the residential provision is outstanding. The aims of the residential provision are understood and implemented by a team of dedicated and conscientious staff. The experienced staff team are dynamic and responsive to pupil's needs. Staff share an ambitious vision to maintain an outstanding provision.

The residential part of the school is managed by the head of residential provision. Several key staff changes have been interchanged with minimal disruption to pupils. Some changes to the provision have been introduced after active consultation with pupils and staff. These are aimed to expand choices and opportunities for pupils although are in the early stages of impact analysis. Staff are professional and mutually cooperative; they are forward thinking and open to new ideas. The staff work seamlessly with academic colleagues continually sharing information and observations of pupils. This is responsive to pupil's needs and enhances the value of the school for individual pupils.

The established staff team continue to make the residential experience special, safe, exciting and fun. Staff are well trained and provide development opportunities. This equips staff for their roles and promotes their professional development. The hours are demanding, despite this staff thoroughly enjoy their roles and strive continually to improve the quality of care. Supervision of staff is provided regularly. All staff say they feel supported and that the senior management team takes their views forward. This helps the staff team feel valued.

Monitoring is robust and incorporates assessment of the school against the national minimum standards. This critique of the service from an independent visitor is thorough and provides pupils with an outside adult to talk to and an additional safeguard.

There have been no complaints about the school. In contrast compliments from parents are abundant. Parents are eternally grateful to have secured a place in the school. All parents spoken to were highly complimentary about the provision. One parent said 'It's a wonderful I would recommend that school to anyone.' Another said 'The school is absolutely fantastic and my daughter is coming out of her shell, the changes are all working well and new staff are doing well.' The school works in close partnership with parents to provide the best care and education for each pupil.

Staff maintain records and store these securely. Care planning incorporates bespoke plans for each pupil in relation to an assessment of needs on admission. Regular review and updates ensures that these reflect incidents and reduction of risk as pupils settle in. This enables staff to meet with parents and evidence the benefit of the provision. This provides a review of the residential provision against pupils' needs determining the best individual package of support is provided for each pupil.

The school has successfully maintained four consecutive outstanding judgments for the residential provision and all national minimum standards are met.

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

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| Unique reference number | 137459 |
| Social care unique reference number | SC024573 |
| DfE registration number | 935/7003 |

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.

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| Type of school | |
| Number of boarders on roll | |
| Gender of boarders | |
| Age range of boarders | |
| Headteacher | Ms Sally Garrett |
| Date of previous boarding inspection | 06/02/2014 |
| Telephone number | 01502 565439 |
| Email address | office@ashleyschool.co.uk |

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