

Arbour Vale School

Arbour Vale School, Farnham Road, Farnham Royal, SLOUGH, SL2 3AE

Inspection dates	09/02/2015 to 11/02/2015
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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 residential provision is exceptionally well managed by a dedicated management team, which is fully integrated into the whole school senior team. The team make excellent use of management information to drive improvements in the care and education of the pupils. The manager is suitably experienced and qualified, and is well liked by staff parents and pupils. One parent saying, 'I get on well with manager she is a lovely, lovely lady who loves my child.'
- The senior management team are constantly implementing dynamic improvements to the service and ensuring that change is successfully managed. The headteacher has commenced learning walks in the residential setting. This aids the process of continuous improvement, building on the regular monitoring by governors and termly feedback from pupils, parents and social workers.
- Pupils make stunning progress, due to the residential experience. The school has evidence of the additional benefits they gain compared to non-residential pupils. Pupils make vast progress in many aspects of their development and importantly can transfer these improvements to home. Parents highlight the overall benefits to them and their families provided by their children's improved behaviours and increases in social and life skills at home. One social worker reported that the sisters of one young person said, 'Our lives are so much better than before. We can concentrate and do our school work because our brother is so calm now.'
- Staff create an exceptionally safe social and physical environment for pupils. They ensure pupils can comment on all aspects of their care. All staff are aware of the vulnerability of the pupils and apply their training in safeguarding to ensure that comprehensive measures are taken to protect them, in and out of school. Parents praise the joint working, for example one parent said, 'They have taken a holistic approach to our problem and have worked with us as well as our child.'
- Children and young people have an active voice in the school and contribute significantly

to change, staff appointments and improvements to the environment. They do this through the student council which is an effective and dynamic forum, making a positive difference for the children and young people. Children and young people gain in confidence and develop responsibility, communication skills, decision making and negotiation skills through their involvement in the council.

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 inspection contact was made with the local authority designated officer (LADO). The school were contacted at 09:10 on 10 February 2015. At 13:00 the inspector met with the head teacher and head of care. During the inspection meetings were held with: head teacher; head of care; Director of Education; chef; two governors; educational psychologist; LADO: residential staff; therapy team; premises manager; and manager of personnel records. Tours were made of the residential house and the school; telephone calls occurred with parents, head of disabilities team and her team; and discussions and meals were enjoyed with students.

Inspection team

Angus Mackay

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Arbour Vale School is a maintained residential special school located on the outskirts of Slough. It provides education for pupils who have moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, or have an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). The school's residential provision, Arbour Vale House, is purpose-built and located within the school site. There is accommodation for 12 pupils. The stated aim of the residential provision is to work on specific objectives with pupils who have a diagnosis of ASD through education programmes, extended learning opportunities, and the delivery of a 24-hour curriculum. Overnight placements are from Monday evening to Friday morning inclusive.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure governors look at risk assessments and care plans during their monitoring visits.
- Enable governors to complete relevant training, including safeguarding and safer recruitment training.
- Include reasons for leaving last employment in staff recruitment records.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for pupils are outstanding. Pupils make measured progress in many aspects of their development. This includes communication, personal hygiene, confidence, decision making, relationship building and a range of skills necessary to enable them to learn in school. One pupil has worked closely with staff to gain an understanding of difficult to comprehend health issues in a parent. The educational psychologist said, 'This work has allowed the child an understanding of illness he could not have gained anywhere else.'

Pupils engage in a twenty four hour curriculum and make exceptional progress in education. They make good use of additional out-of-school learning activities and benefit from excellent preparation for school. This starts from improved sleep patterns and structured morning routines which prepare them for the school day. Pupils use staff support to gradually develop independence in personal care tasks. In language and literacy, mathematics and personal, social and health education all pupils have achieved, at least, expected progress with the majority showing above expected progress. Activities in the house are planned to support the learning programme and build upon this success for pupils. For example pupils assist in shopping and social trips by requesting and paying for items or activities. This aids them in social communication and practical mathematics.

Pupils make significant improvement in their communication skills, achieving above expected progress. They all work on clear communication targets which are coordinated between the school and the house by the speech and language therapist. Reading activities are included in the activity programme for pupils providing them with increased opportunities to improve. They engage in ongoing conversations with staff, visitors and in the wider community. Whenever they go on trips they take communication books or devices to allow them to continue their development of communication skills and aptitudes. Pupils take part in staff recruitment asking questions and aiding in the selection process, improving their conversational and decision making skills. The educational psychologist reports that pupils in the residential house make exceptional progress in a range of communication skills compared to day pupils and are able to transfer these new skills to home. One parent said, 'Our child has been there for several years and her communication has come on fantastically.'

Pupils are happy and safe in the house and enjoy their time there. Parents talk enthusiastically about the fantastic service their children receive and children were observed enjoying staff company. Pupils make good use of the opportunities presented to them to make decisions and engage in shaping the service they receive. They make decisions about: who they wish to provide their care; activities for the week; menu changes and individual meals; the décor of their room; and through the school council aid in staff selection and comment on how school funding is used. In addition pupils complete termly feedback sheets which are used by the house to modify practice and improve the care standards. The feedback is shared with parents ensuring openness and allowing pupils and parents to have evidence of the impact of the feedback. They engage enthusiastically in a wide range of on and off site activities. Activities allow them to develop their mobility, have fun and improve confidence in social situations. Pupils also invite family or friends on activities or simply to visit in the house improving their ownership of the service and help them developing attachments. One social said, 'I am very impressed with the arrangements there. I have spoken to parents and they say children are well cared for. They are fully engaged with activities and theses are enjoyed by the children.'

Pupils make tremendous improvement in personal hygiene and with health issues. Pupils remain registered with their home doctors, dentists and opticians but each has a health care plan in place and have individual health targets. Staff enable them to track progress in their general

development and continue work with external health agencies. This includes child and adolescent mental health services, where required. Many of the pupils arrive with very restricted diets often only eating three or four different food items. Pupils also often arrived with other difficulties around meal times, such as poor behaviour at the table or lack of ability to use cutlery. They all broaden their diet whilst continuing to eat culturally appropriate meals. One parent said of this work, 'Food wise she went from only eating three things. Now she is doing really well at eating, there is nothing she will not try. I have been able to take her out to restaurants and cafes where she is sitting down and will behave and not make scenes. This has improved our lives as a family.' Pupils have progressed in short periods in the house from nappy wearing to being successfully toilet trained. Pupils have worked successfully at transferring this to home. One parent commented, 'Our child used toileting as a control at home. After only a few months this has stopped and we have virtually no incidents now.'

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of residential provision and care is outstanding. Pupils live in a well-maintained, bright and welcoming house. Boarding accommodation is of a high standard and beautifully decorated with photographs, pupil's art work and poems. The walls are festooned with happy images of them interacting with each other and staff. The camera is constantly in use to record pupil's achievements and friendships to maintain an ongoing record for them and their parents. Bedrooms are pleasantly furnished and personalised for each pupil. Where pupils are destructive staff gradually bring in pictures images and personalised items for the pupils to allow them to gain ownership of their space. Care plans detail likes and dislikes so prior to admission a room will have a favourite, such as 'Ben 10,' or 'Frozen,' duvet in place to welcome the new arrival. Admissions are sensitively and carefully planned over a number of weeks when staff construct care and health plans, as well as personal risk assessments. The manager skilfully involves parents, pupils, teachers and social workers in this process which she implements at the pace of the child. During the inspection one prospective resident excitedly discussed coming to the house for a sleep over.

Care plans are detailed, well-structured and evidence tracked progress, in a range of life and social skills, individual targets and additional communication targets. Pupils work with staff at achieving these targets and gaining recognitions for progress and good behaviours. Success however small is recognised and communicated to parents or celebrated in whole school assemblies. Every area of the house has pictures of pupils achieving. Communication for students is a key area for staff focus and visual programmes, planners and a variety of forms of communication are used throughout the house. When pupils are going out they are properly prepared by staff not just with hats and coats but with their communication books. 'You wouldn't leave your voice behind would you?' said the manager. Complaints procedures are accessible to pupils and displays in various formats are all around the house. During the inspection a new poster was constructed with contact details for the children's commissioner. There have been no complaints since the last inspection although parents and pupils know how to do this.

Each pupil has a health care plan, although primary responsibility for health care remains with the parents or carers. Staff will assist with health care appointments in particular where this aids the parents. The school have good links with child and adolescent mental health services and link effectively with them to enable health care programmes and assessments. Health care is sensitively managed and medicine control is excellent. Pupils and parents work closely with the staff to improve eating habits and broaden often highly restricted diets. Food is delicious and meals are eaten enthusiastically by pupils. Meals are transported from a central kitchen but remain of high quality. The food preparation, storage and general kitchen hygiene is excellent. The school has healthy school status and a five star hygiene award. All food is appropriately labelled and temperature controls ensure that meals are appropriately prepared. The menu reflects the diversity of the student group and caters for food allergies as well as cultural or

religious requirements. Staff will provide alternatives to the central diet and pupils also get the opportunity to join in cooking activities.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

The safe care of children in the residential setting, called the house, is outstanding. The school ensure that policies and procedures are comprehensive, current and fully understood and implemented by staff. Staff training is regular and online courses are supported and enhanced by in-house training sessions led by the designated person for safeguarding. Policies include clear guidelines to staff on how to provide care to these highly vulnerable pupils which allows them to: retain an agreed level of control; maintain personal dignity; and meet cultural expectations outlined in their care plans. The careful and sensitive implementation of care plan guidance ensures that safe boundaries are maintained for pupils. Parents are happy with the care their children receive and with staff conduct. One parent said, 'We have peace of mind that he is staying there. He is well looked after. We are one hundred percent sure he is safe staying there and he is happy there.'

The staff use positive reinforcement of desired behaviours and they communicate disapproval of unwelcome or disruptive behaviours. There has been no use of physical interventions other than non-restrictive interventions to lead or guide pupils. Recording systems on behaviour management are sophisticated and provide staff with ongoing evidence of successful approaches. Staff engagement and interaction with pupils is excellent and the high staffing ratios allow individual work to be done with each pupil. The high staffing ratios and skilled staff interventions ensure there is no bullying in the house. Staff support the anti-bullying work in the school and do projects with the pupils to reinforce the positives of friendship. One set of parents said, 'we have never seen, or heard of any bullying here. We put this down to the great skills of the staff have in dealing with the children with autism spectrum disorder.' Parents and social workers stressed the excellent work done in the house where disruptive behaviours, which occur in school or home, are reduced or do not happen at all. The staff work well with parents to aid them in transferring this learning to home. One parent commenting on the assistance provided to them said, 'The head of care and her team are not just about our child but also us. They have meetings with us and put in place things to help us as manage our child's behaviour as well. It has been really good. It was not them saying you are not coping but how can we help you?'

Pupils live in a safe and secure environment. A combination of the physical structure of the building, allied to staff interaction, engagement and supervision of pupils, has ensured no one has gone missing since before the last inspection. Individual risk assessments are extensive, comprehensive and used dynamically by staff to enable often challenging activities which have real risks attached to them. Staff enlarge the boundaries around the pupils and increase their community involvements by their imaginative use of risk assessment. All health and safety checks are in place and compliance with fire and health and safety risk assessments is rigorously monitored through a facilities team. For example during the inspection recommended actions from the fire risk assessment were being implemented. Fire drills and fire safety is well managed and is under constant review to ensure that personal evacuation plans are current and that staff can meet the actions in them.

Staff recruitment follows the most current guidance on ensuring safe appointments. The central record is efficiently maintained and all checks on the suitability of candidates is followed. During interviews candidates are questioned about gaps in employment and reasons for leaving previous jobs but the latter is not recorded on the application form from the local authority. Safer recruitment is enhanced by the engagement of students in interviewing prospective members of staff. All members of the student council, including a resident of the house, conduct part of the interview and contribute in a real and effective way to safe appointments. One member of the board of governors has completed safer recruitment training and all have access to online

safeguarding training.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding

Leadership and management of the residential provision is outstanding. The head of care is experienced and has: suitable care and management qualifications; enhanced qualifications in safeguarding; qualification as a vocational assessor for diploma level courses; and a qualification as a trainer in dealing with difficult behaviour. She is an important and valued member of the school management team. A senior person from the external education management team said of the appointment, 'the head of residential was an important appointment to ensure that the house and school work as one.' Relationships between the school and the house are excellent with reciprocal arrangements in place to enable each setting to improve performance. The head of care has full school responsibility for behaviour management ensuring a coordinated response to behaviours across all settings. She enjoys the confidence of staff and parents and has an excellent, in-depth knowledge of each pupil. 'I have a good relationship with the manager and she gave me an excellent insight into the children and the working of the house,' one social commented.

The headteacher and head of care produce detailed reports on the performance of the house. This includes: an annual review of operations; a self-evaluation summary; and an annual improvement plan. The house is included in the full school improvement plan reflecting the shared understanding, in the school management, of the importance of the house. A senior person in the local authority education management structure commented, 'The house is not a separate resource but part of the whole educational establishment'. The headteacher seeks to support the whole school approach to service improvement by conducting learning walks in the house as well as school. This rigorous approach to improving residential care is evidenced in the detailed and challenging improvement plan for the house, which is used to drive this continuous progression.

Governors are: highly active; they are knowledgeable about their role and enthusiastically involved in the development of the house. They conduct regular child-focussed monitoring visits which always include comments from pupils and their families. Governors share the school ethos that the house is an integral and important component of the school. One governor commented, 'Here we have the blend which we need where everyone supports everyone else, in school and residential.' However governors were not routinely examining risk assessments and care plans during monitoring visits. During the inspection the head of care adjusted the recording sheet and spoke to the chair of governors to ensure these areas are regularly reviewed in future.

Managers ensure that staffing levels are excellent and that the staff team has sufficient numbers, a good gender mix and is suitably diverse to meet the care and cultural needs of the pupils. Staff training is excellent and designed to provide staff with the skills, competencies and knowledge to meet the complex care and communication needs of the pupils. Training is thoroughly evaluated and future needs assessed and agreed with the governing body. Appraisal and supervision are live and active components of the development of staff. Annual appraisals are used as part of the identification of future training needs and this is monitored through supervision and half yearly reviews. Supervision is regular and focussed on improving the individual and the service provided to pupils and their families. The school uses external validation of progress in inclusion and continuing professional development to aid their monitoring of the effectiveness of these programmes. The outcome is a highly motivated and skilled staff team which has rigorous performance targets to meet in their process of continuous improvement.

The staff and managers in the house maintain excellent communication links with parents and social workers. All comment on the welcoming nature of the staff and the variety and good quality of communication. One social worker commented on the welcoming approach of staff and

the manager to her and to parents. Some parents visit regularly and all receive weekly photographic newsletters specific to their child. A typical comment from parents was, 'Staff go one step further than necessary. They have always been very helpful. We do communicate things which go well for us. If they see something new they will ask us if we have seen this before. Each night we discuss our child's behaviours and will discuss views and strategies. Even out of hours we would get help.' The home responds excellently to points of improvement, raised during inspections and through internal risk assessment processes. Most importantly they have ensured that pupils can make comments on the residential service through their termly feedback sheets which lead to changes in the setting.

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	110185
Social care unique reference number	SC370928
DfE registration number	871/7035

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	Maintained
Number of boarders on roll	11
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	8 to 19
Headteacher	Mrs Debbie Richards
Date of previous boarding inspection	29/01/2014
Telephone number	01753515560
Email address	veronica.ellul@arbourvaleschool.org

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