

# High Close School

Barnardos, High Close School, High Close, Wiltshire Road, WOKINGHAM, Berkshire, RG40 1TT

<b>Inspection dates</b>	11/03/2015	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Good	2
Residential pupils' safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is good because

- Young people are at the centre of practice. Outcomes are excellent, with young people making progress in all aspects of their lives. The school continuously seeks ways to improve outcomes for young people through open dialogue and rigorous monitoring.
- Leaders and managers foster a culture of safety where young people are successfully kept safeguarded. Health and safety is given a high priority to ensure the well-being of all concerned. The school takes a risk-aware, rather than risk-averse approach, with young people encouraged to participate fully in a range of activities and exciting pursuits.
- The provision for safeguarding young people's welfare is outstanding. Procedures for child protection, safe recruitment of staff and health and safety are robust and effectively implemented so that young people are cared for in an extremely safe environment.
- Monitoring and analysis of trends and behaviours enables the school to develop strategies to minimise the use of high risk interventions. Records demonstrate this is successful with the number of high risk holds decreasing. A point for improvement has been made in relation to record keeping.
- Staff focus highly effectively on the individual needs and wishes of the young people. Staff use this focus to inform individualised and integrated care planning for each young person. This planning leads them to considerable personal achievements.
- Promoting the well-being of young people is central to how the school operates. Staff actively promote healthy lifestyles and there is exceptionally good provision for addressing both the routine and specific health needs of individual young people. Collaborative working across departments is highly effective in promoting the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of each young person. Points for improvement have been made in relation to the arrangements in dealing with medication; no shortfalls were observed in practice.
- The extremely positive relationships between staff and young people is the base on

which these young people to develop as individuals knowing they are safe, valued and respected as individuals.

- The school is extremely well led and managed. The unit managers and education staff work together effectively to promote young people's welfare. They routinely reflect on and evaluate their practice to continually improve it. Within each of the residential households, the needs of the young people are exceptionally well met by the extremely well-trained and experienced staff looking after them.

### **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 inspection was announced on the morning of the first day of the inspection. An initial meeting was held with the Principal and the head of care. Discussions with care staff, and also catering, the bursar, therapists, field social worker, independent visitor and a governor took place. All four residential units were visited throughout the inspection and at different times of the day and evenings. Inspectors met with pupils, the senior management team and a broad range of professionals connected with the school. They evaluated responses from staff and pupils who completed point in time surveys which were distributed during the inspection. Phone calls and emails contact was made with social workers and a parent. A vast array of records, documentation and databases were inspected and assessed. Meals were taken with pupils and a good range of activities were observed. No responses were received on ParentView. Records, policies and procedures were scrutinised. SCRI Jennie Christopher was involved in the inspection on day one.

## Inspection team

Emeline Evans

Lead social care inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

High Close School is a non-maintained school operated by Barnardo's. It provides for both day and residential pupils of both genders aged from seven to 18 years, with most boarders being of senior school age. There are 80 pupils on roll, with provision for 36 boarding. At the time of the inspection there were 25 residential pupils.

The school is set in seven acres of woodland, within easy walking distance of the town centre of Wokingham. There are four residential units on the school site. There is a pattern of fortnightly boarding and residential pupils usually return home on alternate weekends and during school holidays.

The school takes young people who have been unable to succeed in mainstream school and have statements of special educational need arising from social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The range of additional specific special needs with which the school is working is broad, and may include young people with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, dyspraxia, autistic spectrum disorders, speech and language difficulties and visual and auditory impairment.

The last inspection took place in September 2013.

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

- Review the systems for recording measures of control and discipline to ensure children's views are consistently and comprehensively recorded.
- Review the medication arrangements currently in operation to ensure they are robust and effective.
- Develop a on-going process for regularly assessing staff competency for administering medication.

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

### Outstanding

Outcomes for young people are outstanding. The emotional well-being of young people significantly improves during their time at the school. They develop alternative ways of expressing their difficult and challenging emotions. Young people are part of a highly integrated school community that includes group living, education and therapy. There are exceptionally good quality relationships between all of the teams in the school and with the young people. The excellent community spirit helps young people develop a strong affiliation to their house group. They develop a strong sense of their own value in this community. Young people continue to receive support to address their own difficulties while learning a tolerance and understanding of others. They make new friends, grow in confidence, develop socially, take on roles of responsibility, and become more independent. One professional commented, 'This school has transformed this little boy's life.'

Young people enjoy the boarding experience and are very positive about the care and support that they receive by all staff. They are encouraged by staff to develop personal interests. Young people develop well-rounded interests and are empowered to achieve their full potential. The exceptional range of opportunities and activities that boarding offers promotes each young person's development. Young people commented, 'We get to do lots of great things together'. Staff are proactive in enabling young people to be actively involved in a wide range of community activities such as judo, cadets, sewing clubs, dance and social trips to restaurants or the cinema. This positively supports their social development and skills for independence. Young people have excellent opportunities to develop their social skills, which ensure they are well equipped to take advantage of opportunities for integrating into the community.

Health care needs are met extremely well with a particular emphasis on addressing their emotional well-being. Young people benefit immensely from the school's on-site therapy team. This is an area that has been further expanded since the last inspection with recruitment of a school counsellor, psychotherapist and cognitive behaviour therapist. The accessibility of this team means that children are not waiting for long periods of time for the therapeutic input they may require. The schools healthcare arrangements are highly effective with close integrated working between all the teams within the school and with external professionals. This promotes young people's physical, emotional and psychological health.

Young people make outstanding progress socially and emotionally through their residential experience. For example, they significantly increase their ability to have healthy and mutually trusting relationships and significantly decrease their aggression and anti-social behaviours. This is the impact of the school's work in continually assessing and reviewing young people's social and emotional progress. Outcomes for each young person are regularly reviewed and areas for further development are incorporated into keyworker targets. Review of this information evidenced exceptional progress for young people across many areas.

Seeking the views of young people is central to practice within the school. Opportunities to influence matters are provided by a school council and prefects in each of the houses, all of which were reported by young people to operate very effectively. Changes to the menu and pocket money are some examples of how the views of young people have influenced how the school operates.

Wherever possible the school encourages young people to learn life skills, experience the wider community and develop appropriate levels of independence. Bespoke independence programmes prepare those at or approaching adulthood for their next step, be it living independently or moving onto a residential college.

## Quality of residential provision and care

## Good

The quality of the school's boarding provision for young people is good. The integration of new young people is expertly managed, engaging parents, prospective young people, care staff and therapeutic staff in a carefully planned induction process. Pastoral support offered to young people who are placed in the school is extremely supportive and nurturing. Comments from young people and parents highlight how well new pupils are supported. 'The staff are brilliant and he has settled in better than could ever have been expected', commented one parent. The school ethos is one of providing holistic care to young people and meeting their individual needs. This is achieved through a multi-disciplinary team involving the education, care and therapy departments.

Admission to the school is carefully considered to ensure the individual needs of each young person can be met. Excellent systems for obtaining information on prospective pupils and very thorough initial assessments across departments help to inform highly individual plans for addressing the needs of each young person. Plans are subject to regular review and exceptionally good communication exists across the school.

Some young people remain registered with their own doctors, dentists and opticians, and parents work closely with staff to ensure they can meet all identified health needs. All young people are registered with the school doctor as a temporary resident. Health care is good and provides the young people with a caring, sensitive and innovative service. Staff maintain records to a high standard, evidencing close working with the school, residential staff, in-house specialists and external mental health services, as necessary. However, due to high supervision levels required with young people in one house, the practice of pre-dispensing medication has become the routine. This is undertaken a number of hours before administering medication. There is currently not a risk assessment in place to support the decision making process and to identify potential risks. No discrepancies have been identified as a result of this practice. The senior management team took action during the course of the inspection to try and identify a solution. There have been a number of medication discrepancies since the last inspection. Currently, staff competency is assessed following a medication error and not as an on-going process. It is therefore unclear if staff are fully competent in taking on this responsibility.

The approach in addressing the emotional needs of young people is very good. Excellent support is available within school and includes advice and guidance from a psychotherapist and cognitive behaviour therapist who can offer young people individual programmes of intervention. Such expertise informs care planning and aids the holistic approach adopted by the school. This is matched with close links with external health care agencies which ensures young people and their parents and carers receive all the professional support they may require. Such an approach is most important given the complex needs many young people have.

The arrangements for food are of a high standard. Meals are varied and healthy with any special dietary requirements catered for. Young people benefit from a culture where they are continually learning how to stay healthy. The catering manager has recently undertaken a training course on allergens. She has very good knowledge of individual dietary needs and ensures these are appropriately catered for. Additionally young people are given the opportunity to try new foods they have not experienced before.

The school provides young people with a varied and exciting array of activities. Young people state, 'There is so much to do.' Activities match their choices and this improves their feelings of self-worth. Trips off-site include horse riding at a community-based project and visits to parks and local shops. Managers and staff are keen for young people to integrate with the local community and support them to be active members of local clubs.

Residential accommodation is of a good standard. The houses are comfortable and maintained to a suitable and homely condition. Young people are able to personalise their own rooms and do so with posters and photographs. Young people appear very comfortable and report they like the living environments and generally invest in maintaining their condition with little evidence of damage.

Young people are able to contact families and carers by using the house telephones. Contact is supported and encouraged by the staff to ensure young people are able to speak to parents and carers about any needs or issues they may have while away from home. Staff are very aware of these arrangements and support children emotionally during these times.

### **Residential pupils' safety**

### **Outstanding**

The arrangements for young people's safety are outstanding. The culture embedded in the school ensures that they benefit from a robust and rigorous approach which treats their emotional and physical safety as paramount. All staff are aware of the robust policies in place and closely adhere to it in the event of any concerns.

Safety is central to practice and the culture within the school ensures students are protected from harm. Designated senior staff take responsibility for child protection and all have undertaken appropriate training. The school works effectively with the local safeguarding children board and local authority designated officer, promptly addressing any safeguarding incidents or concerns. Records of concerns are meticulous and provide an excellent audit trail, demonstrating how procedures have been followed and practice reviewed in light of incidents. All staff have training in child protection and safeguarding of young people including training in child sexual exploitation and self-harm, and apply this in their practice, improving young people's understanding of how to stay safe. The school is particularly strong at delivering online protection guidance to young people, enabling them to stay safe when using electronic equipment. An e-safety committee has recently been established which ensures everyone is consistent in their messages and keep up to date with current information.

Young people benefit from the safe selection of suitable staff with all appropriate clearances and qualifications evidenced pre-recruitment. The safe selection of staff and confidence of young people in this process is greatly enhanced by their meaningful involvement in the interviews.

There is a robust whole school behaviour management policy. Behaviour management techniques are implemented effectively by staff who are mindful of the challenging behaviours of young people and seek the most appropriate ways to manage them. Staff work hard to support young people in addressing their most difficult behaviours, which can include aggression. Effective strategies are introduced on an individual basis along with the young people's input. Staff are trained in the use of physical interventions and only apply them when necessary. Regular practice and accountability ensures there is sufficient challenge to all interventions and feedback into practice. On occasion, incidents of restraint involve the use of high risk strategies. Monitoring and analysis of trends and behaviours has enabled the school to develop strategies to minimise such interventions. Records demonstrate this is successful with the number of high risk front ground recovery holds decreasing. It was reported that the school aims to diminish these holds in the future. Records following a physical intervention are detailed, however details of young people's views following these interventions at times lack detail. This makes it difficult to monitor the effectiveness of all interventions. Young people are in general well behaved and very supportive of one another. Bullying is not a significant issue amongst the boarding community and any instances are dealt with effectively by staff. A rewards and consequences system operates across all aspects of school life and celebrating the success of pupils is an integral and important aspect of life here.

On very rare occasions young people are identified as absent without authority for a short period of time. A robust and rigorous procedure is implemented swiftly to keep young people as safe as possible. Missing from care is not identified as an issue. However, there are agreed protocols with the local police in place should this event arise.

Health and safety within the residential provision is well managed. Routine servicing and checks take place as required. Maintenance is undertaken promptly and there is a clear programme of refurbishment and development. Fire safety precautions are checked on a regular basis, including the servicing of firefighting equipment, testing of alarms and the undertaking of evacuation drills. Risk assessments are routinely reviewed, updated and endorsed; these assessments include environmental checks as well as on-site and off-site activities.

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

The management and organisation of the residential provision is outstanding. The residential, education and therapy teams work effectively together. This whole school approach means that all the different parts of the school run smoothly together and residential pupils are extremely well cared for and fully supported in all respects. The school demonstrates a very strong commitment to the continuing improvement of the residential provision and the service it provides for young people and their families and carers.

The residential management team are experienced and have been in post for a substantial period. The head of care has very recently been promoted following the departure of the previous post-holder. She had taken the role of acting head of care for a considerable amount of time prior to this appointment. The management team has an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision, and are constantly seeking ways in which to improve young people's experiences. Regular reports from the independent visitor provide substantial challenge and insight into practice. At the last inspection, it was recommended that reports produced by the independent visitor were more consistent for each of the units and the content to give more meaning and evaluation. These reports have been developed into comprehensive documents. The visitor comments positively and notes that there is a 'culture of openness' within the school.

The dynamics of each staff team ensures that young people's needs are communicated and acted upon efficiently and consistently. Young people have a voice in the school through the school council, boarding house meetings, an independent visitor and easy access to the senior management team. Young people report excellent relationships with their key workers. They say there are many adults that they can talk to if they want to share any worries or concerns.

The staff team is experienced and enthusiastic. They are interested in exploring new approaches to ensure they are providing the best service possible for young people. The aims of the residential provision are effectively implemented by all staff. The ethos of the provision, as highlighted in the Statement of Principles, is clearly implemented in practice; the residential provision successfully creates an inclusive and child-centred environment. Staff who have worked in the residential team for several years comment that they thoroughly enjoy their work. Staffing arrangements in the residential provision are remarkably good. A highly qualified and exceptionally well-trained staff group operate extremely effectively as a team and receive excellent support from the head of care. All residential care staff undertake a comprehensive induction and then go on to complete the necessary qualifications. A thorough training programme ensures staff are confident in their roles and that skills remain in line with current practice. Further areas for development are identified in annual appraisals including specific areas of interest.

Communication and liaison with parents is excellent. Both young people and parents know how to



access the formal complaints system if they have any concerns. Complaints are managed promptly and to the complainant's satisfaction.

The school has the recommended policies and records in place to help the support of residential pupils. These are regularly reviewed by management. Young people's records provide comprehensive information on their history and progress at the school and are kept securely. As a result, young people can access their records at any time and gain an accurate understanding of their time at the school.

At the last inspection, a recommendation was made in relation to reviewing young people's risk assessments. These have been updated and separate risk assessments have been implemented which include vital information relating to identified risk and strategies to reduce these risks. These are well known by the staff team and they are used fluidly across the shifts.

## 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>	110181
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC011327
<b>DfE registration number</b>	872/7006

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>	Non - Maintained
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	25
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	9 to 16
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Zoe Lattimer
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	24/09/2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	0118 9785767
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:zoe.lattimer@barnardos.org.uk">zoe.lattimer@barnardos.org.uk</a>

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