

Wells Park School, Lambourne Road, CHIGWELL, Essex, IG7 6NN

### Inspection dates

29/09/2015 to 30/09/2015

### The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

**Outstanding** **1**

The quality of care and support

Outstanding 1

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding 1

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good 2

### Summary of key findings

#### The residential provision is outstanding because

- Children have the opportunity to succeed in this provision. They make significant social, emotional and academic progress from joining to the point of moving on. Outcomes and achievements for residential pupils are excellent.
- The management and staff strive to improve their residential provision in line with individual residential pupils needs. Children, parents, carers and professionals are unanimously positive about the impact of this provision.
- Safeguarding of children underpins the delivery of high quality care, which all staff deliver in a predictable and consistent manner. The careful management of care and safety is non-oppressive and child focused.
- The leaders have a strong knowledge and experience base. Their contribution, constant presence and availability to children, care staff, family, carers and professionals ensures a seamless approach to care.
- There is one breach of national minimum standards, this relates to the content of the six annual monitoring reports. Reports currently do not assess and evaluate the residential provision.
- One area for improvement is identified in respect of the records of restraint. Staff should ensure that these are comprehensive and include the views of the children involved.

## **Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.

- Ensure that monitoring visits include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded; an assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish). (Breach of National Minimum Standard 20.2)

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of records relating to restraints. Ensure these records consistently reflect residential pupils' views.

## **Information about this inspection**

The inspection of the four residential apartments took place within two hours of announcement. Inspectors gathered evidence through observation of care routines and practice; scrutiny of policies and records; discussion with parents and carers; meetings with staff and residential pupils. Discussions took place with staff responsible for leading, managing and organising residential care, including residential and support staff, acting heads and two school governors. Discussions took place with external professionals including the Local Authority Designated Officer, a member of the local authority commissioning team, a member of the school nursing team, a foster carer and a placing social worker.

## **Inspection team**

Angie Bishop

Lead social care inspector

## **Full Report**

### **Information about this school**

Wells Park School is a local authority maintained residential special school for forty pupils of either gender aged between 5 and 11 years. Forty pupils reside at the school for four nights a week. The residential accommodation is provided in four linked apartments located on the school site. The school is situated in a residential area of Chigwell and caters for pupils who have emotional, behavioural, and social difficulties. The residential provision was last inspected in September 2014.

## Inspection Judgements

### The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

**Outstanding**

Children make excellent progress socially, emotionally and academically during their time as residential pupils in this school. Staff offer individual intervention, which results in reintegration into mainstream provision; children achieve this with improved self-confidence and worth. A child said: 'I couldn't go to school before, now I can and I can do so many things and I am going to go to a school near my house. I would like to be a teacher when I am older.'

The residential accommodation is exceptionally welcoming and comfortable. It is furnished to a high standard; children personalise their rooms, photographs of them enjoying activities with staff are present in all areas. Leaders and staff are committed to providing a homely environment; they achieve this in the entirety of the living areas. When new education staff join the school, they are invited to dine and spend time with the children in their accommodation. This introduces them to the importance of the integral approach the school offers to care and education.

Children's time is well structured and the school operates a purposeful twenty four hour curriculum. An experienced and stable team of care officers staff the accommodation; they quickly attune to children's individual care needs and work cohesively with the education provision to deliver safe, predictable care. All children feel safe and protected; they build trusting, dependable relationships with staff and peers. Bullying is not an identified issue. Staff are quick to recognise any potential for difficulties in peer relationships and respond proactively, thus preventing any escalation.

Children are extremely happy in this provision. They interact naturally with staff and each other and identify an abundance of positives about the care they receive. The optimism children share about this school and their care translates into improved self-worth and assurance. This is intrinsically linked to the remarkable progress they make in all areas of their lives. Staff engage children in a range of creatively planned activities within and outside of the home, all of which focus on further developing children's confidence and all round ability. Children earn tokens throughout their school day and in the residential provision, they use these to buy activities, which take place after school. All children enjoy an offsite activity together on a Thursday evening after school, followed by a relaxed 'pyjama breakfast' on a Friday morning; this is the day the children return home.

Staff receive training to deliver ongoing activities, some of which are certificated, for example, swimming and cycling. Staff film activities and children also enjoy making films of a range of subject areas. They plan the films with music. At the point of moving on, children are presented with a lasting memory of their time at the school. Children frequently return to the provision to share their successes with current residential pupils, this serves as further motivation for children and staff. A parent said: 'He loves the school, he loves his friends, they help him make and keep friends. He gets on well with his teachers and his peers. He loves the activities, he has done rock climbing, horse riding, cycling, he is always doing something. He would never have stood on a stage

and sung before he came here, he could not even eat with a knife and fork. He was classed as a naughty child in his old school.'

## **The quality of care and support**

## **Outstanding**

Superbly high quality care is delivered consistently and in a predictable way by all staff across the provision. Parents and carers gain an increased understanding of their children's complex needs because of the care staff provide. This translates into improved familial relationships for children, their families, and carers. This, in the main, leads to a de-escalation in social work involvement in the home and enables children to remain living with their primary carers.

Leaders and staff meticulously plan and manage initial, routine and moving on transitions. Staff work tirelessly with children, family members, carers and professionals to ensure there is minimal disruption between home and school. Leaders and managers understand the impact of change on children. They respond with compassion and consideration. Upon leaving this provision, staff meet with and accompany children to meet with staff in their new provision to support the transition. A family member said: 'The way they settled him and the way they treated us was fantastic. They came and visited us at home and then we went and spent time in the school and the boarding house, they understood how hard it was for me and for him.'

Staff, professionals and significant people develop plans, which the leaders co-ordinate and constantly review. Children's well-being and progress is central to everything that happens in this provision and the impact on children's progress is integral to planning. Care staff are attentive to children's individual needs and the impact this has on their sense of themselves. Staff use nurturing care, education and positive relationships to embrace and promote individuality, as a result, children begin to recognise their own worth and valuable place in the wider community. Use of focused activities encourages children to explore new activities that further promote their life experiences. One child said: 'I know I can have a good job and I can make something of myself. I could not do anything when I came here three years ago, now look at me.'

Staff openly exchange information with family members, carers and professionals; this leads to complete transparency and removes opportunities for miscommunication. Parents and carers maintain and enjoy contact with children during their weekly stays. Children have their own private area where staff support them to use interactive media to contact their siblings, parents and carers. Children can invite people to visit them for dinner and staff will support them to prepare and serve meals. Being able to see each other using virtual contact is reassuring for adults and children; this significantly reduces anxiety, particularly at the start of children's residential stays. A parent said: 'My son was not in school at all for six months before he came here. They reassured me and him instantly. I was anxious, but being able to speak to him and see him as I was talking to him, and him see me, made the world of difference.'

Staff are innovative, they inspire children to share and manage their feelings; this promotes changes in behaviour and enables leaders and staff to gauge children's wishes and feelings. Leaders and staff use this in conjunction with observations of children's behaviour and feedback from parents and carers to monitor and measure progress and

inform change. Leaders share residential feedback, experiences, and behaviours with education staff daily and weekly with all key parties. A grandparent said: 'I cannot say one bad thing. When my grandson comes home on Friday, I get a detailed record of what he has been doing from his teacher and key worker. They tell me how he has been feeling and how he has been behaving.'

## **How well children and young people are protected**

## **Outstanding**

A knowledgeable and experienced staff team effectively safeguard children and themselves. Robust safeguarding policies and procedures underpin practice and staff actively apply these in children's day to day care. The school management team annually update safeguarding policies and procedures. Staff are clear about these procedures and apply them imaginatively to ensure this is not oppressive for children. Whistleblowing procedures are clear and comprehensive; staff know how to utilise these if necessary along with the process to follow in respect of any allegations against professionals.

Children identify a number of staff members they can approach if they have any worries. They can do this at any time and staff are constantly available to the children. Staff support children to keep themselves safe from harm, this is always age appropriate and takes the form of exposure to new experiences and the use of discussions, games, and quizzes, which are captivating for children. There is a transparent and comprehensive complaints process and policy in place. Children know how to make a complaint however, they remain sure that they do not have any complaints. An independent person is available to the children if they wish to speak to someone outside of the school care setting.

Leaders and staff work with multiple professionals and devise and frequently review risk assessments specific to each child's behaviour; these cover daily routines and individual activities. The assessments detail de-escalation techniques and required responses from staff; application of these is unobtrusive and is second nature to staff. Staff maintain records and share information readily with parents, carers and professionals. Risk taking behaviour significantly reduces when children begin staying in this school. This continues to the point where children safely reintegrate into mainstream non-residential education. One parent said: 'I never thought this was possible, every child and family should have the opportunity that my son and me have. It has changed our lives.'

When staff identify child protection concerns, they respond calmly and in a sensitive and caring manner. They share information and proactively engage with the local authority in re-evaluating and challenging plans for children's care outside of the school. Following any change in care plan, the leaders and staff work with families and the local authority to achieve safe outcomes for children. A social worker said: 'The staff have the ability to manage and understand the triggers for his behaviour without it being a problem, he doesn't feel he is being punished. He never feels that staff don't like him, they listen to him, he trusts them; the system works beautifully.'

Healthcare arrangements are effective and staff who understand each individual child's medical needs safely manage medication. Staff access external health provisions in respect of children's emotional and physical health needs; they always engage carers in

this process and ensure there is universal acknowledgement and understanding of children's health needs.

Missing is not identified as an issue in the residential provision. Where it has occurred involving a residential pupil in school time, responses have followed in house and local procedures and protocol.

## **The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers** Good

The school is stable and continues to benefit from knowledgeable and experienced leadership. In the recent absence of the permanent head teacher, the longstanding head of care and an experienced leader from a similar school provision are sharing the full time headship of the education and residential provision. This has had minimal impact on the efficacy of the residential provision as the head of care maintains a presence in the day to day lives of the children and staff. She is supported by a robust and experienced management and staff team and continues to be continuously available to staff, children, parents, carers, and professionals.

A stable and experienced staff team delivers care and children are familiar with all members of care staff. Each child is allocated a key worker, who assumes responsibility for that child. In practice, the management of the provision affords all staff members the time to enable children to become acquainted with them. Where a natural relationship difficulty is identified, the heads and senior care staff review the matching of caregivers and children.

Senior staff are passionate about role modelling and developing exceptional practice; they support more junior staff to identify their strengths and areas for development with reviews three times a year by the head of care. Staff teams meet regularly to review practice and the value and impact of the care they deliver. Feedback from children, family members, carers and professionals informs change. Informal staff supervision complements scheduled routine supervision. Staff recognise the value of the supervision they are receiving and of the therapeutic support available in terms of their approach to each child. Each member of staff has a target lead development plan, which is regularly reviewed and adapted; learning opportunities are ever present. Where there are incidents involving children, staff are supported collectively and individually to debrief and review strategies. Staff confirm that management presence is constant.

Recruitment processes ensure that staff bring a variety of high standard qualification and experience to their work. This is underpinned further by a solid theoretical base which they gain through in house and external training. Understanding and application of therapeutic approaches is evident throughout the care children receive. Collectively, the management and staff team want children to succeed; they invest in children's short, medium and long term goals and the children respond to this in a positive way.

The head identifies that in the main, staff treat records as living documents; children's progress and input into records is clear. Some records require further detail, in particular, records of physical intervention do not routinely reflect the valuable follow up

care and support staff and leaders offer to children.

Twice termly monitoring reports do not currently include an evaluation of the residential provision; this is a breach of a national minimum standard.

## What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

| Judgement   | Description   |
|-------------|---|
| Outstanding | A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced. |
| Good        | A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.   |

## School details

|                                     |          |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number             | 115450   |
| Social care unique reference number | SC018021 |
| DfE registration number             | 881/7022 |

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>                       | Residential Special School   |
| <b>Number of boarders on roll</b>           | 40                           |
| <b>Gender of boarders</b>                   | Mixed                        |
| <b>Age range of boarders</b>                | 5 to 11                      |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                          | Vacant Position              |
| <b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b> | 24/09/2014                   |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                     | 0208 502 6442                |
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