

# Bleasdale School

Bleasdale School, 27 Emesgate Lane, Silverdale, Carnforth, Lancashire, LA5 0RG

<b>Inspection dates</b>	19/01/2016 to 21/01/2016	
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of care and support	Outstanding	1
How well children and young people are protected	Good	2
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is good because

- The residential provision provides pupils with outstanding care, guidance and support, but the judgement for the overall experiences and progress of pupils is good.
- Pupils make good progress as a result of the effective collaborative working between care and education staff. Staff implement strategies compiled following on-going, assessment of pupils' needs. This ensures pupils receive tailored care and support to promote their specific developmental requirements
- Pupils flourish and improve their social, communication and behavioural skills. Through extremely responsive and positive relationships with staff, they are developing confidence and self-esteem knowing they are valued as unique individuals
- The safety of pupils is central to all practice. Effective safeguarding measures protect pupils. Staff are confident and competent in their safeguarding role and implement appropriate action to protect pupils' welfare
- Leaders are passionately committed to providing pupils with high standards of individualised care and support. All staff share this dedication which is clearly demonstrated through numerous examples of best practice in providing care and support for pupils with complex needs resulting from profound multiple learning disabilities

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

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop more creative and innovative ways of providing activities that develop young people's emotional and social skills
- Complete risk assessments for all activities undertaken by the young people to support the individual risk assessments already in place
- When a major sanction for a child behaviour is applied, ensure that there is a record is kept so that it can be monitored
- Conduct regular reviews of staffing levels to ensure these do not impact negatively upon activity provision
- Provide opportunities for staff to talk with governors in confidence and in private
- Allow pupils to develop a relationship with the independent visitor by encouraging her to visit more regularly
- When monitoring the boarding provision ensure that the governors are fully aware of all the areas that are required to be monitored and evaluate on their findings

## Information about this inspection

The school was given three hours' notice of the inspection. Meetings were held with the head teacher, care manager, chair of governors, school nurse, business and finance officer, designated safeguarding lead, co-opted governor, residential staff and pupils. The residential house were visited with observation of staff and pupil's interactions and activities. The inspector joined pupils for two meals. Policies, records and individual pupil's files were examined. Email contact was made with parents and the local safeguarding team

## Inspection team

Elaine Clare

Lead social care inspector

# **Full Report**

## **Information about this school**

Bleasdale School is a residential special school operated by Lancashire County Council Education Department and registered with the Department for Education. The school's primary function is to provide children with profound and multiple learning disabilities with a positive and safe educational experience while boarding at the school. Up to 19 children reside at the school for up to a maximum of 38 weeks of the year. All children go home every other weekend and during the school holidays. Other children attend the school on a daily basis. A large, multi-disciplinary staff group meet the complex educational and physical needs of the children. The residential unit is separate from the school. It is a large country house with many historic features. There are splendid views across the bay with extensive grounds and gardens. The unit is provided with a range of facilities to cater for the individual needs of the children.

## Inspection Judgements

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

**Good**

Through personalised support pupils who have complex needs resulting from their disabilities make good progress. Resident pupils grow and develop their social, communication and behavioural skills with well-considered targets derived from genuinely close, collaborative working between care and school staff. Some activities, to meet those targets, sometimes lack creativity and on occasion have been repeated from one week to the next. Developing pupils' life skills is integral throughout the school's curriculum, including the time they spend in the residential environment. Care staff support them to become confident young adults at a pace and level appropriate to their ability and vulnerability.

Staff know the pupils very well and are nurturing and responsive to their needs. Through consistent, positive interactions, pupils develop warm, trusting relationships with staff. Residential care staff understand the diverse needs of the residents in their care. For example one parent commented about the care staff 'They know the individual needs of my child.' This knowledge is used effectively for example, the high level of communication observed between staff and residential pupils. Communication with all pupils, no matter what difficulties they may experience, is not a barrier and does not impinge on their ability to make decisions about themselves. This is enhanced with on-going consultation between themselves and staff.

Pupils are happy and enjoy their residential experience. Their welfare and well-being is central to all practice with staff implementing strategies to promote their development and protect them from harm. Some written risk assessments do not fully capture the presenting risks for pupils, for example, staff do not always receive clear and explicit guidance in order to successfully manage challenging or risk-taking behaviour.

Leaders and managers are aspirational and with the enthusiasm and commitment of the staff team ensure pupils receive individualised support so that their unique and specific needs are met. Pupils thrive in an environment where they are valued as individuals and where their views and opinions matter. A parent remarked 'the school has been absolutely fantastic'.

### The quality of care and support

**Outstanding**

Highly individualised care plans demonstrate that staff know pupils extremely well. Support strategies are specific to the needs of each pupil and include interventions for staff to use to promote development and provide a constructive experience. Staff are skilled in implementing these support strategies within a structured environment. Adopting a positive and enthusiastic approach, staff offer a nurturing environment where pupils can develop their individuality, benefit from opportunities to maximise their

potential and improve their self-esteem.

Interaction with pupils is calm and focused allowing them to respond positively to the support staff offer and build trusting relationships. Enabling pupils to make their views, opinions and needs known is a clear priority for staff. Speech and language is embedded into the whole day, supporting pupils with their communication difficulties. Care staff receive training to support pupils' communication needs. Individual positive handling plans include information on assisting pupils with their social and communication skills. Staff use alternative forms of communication for pupils who are pre-verbal to aid their understanding and ensure they have opportunities to express themselves. This integrated approach allows pupils to benefit from the consistent application of communication methods best suited to their individual needs.

Staff are proactive in seeking pupils' views and opinions, providing them with choices and support to help make responsible choices according to their age and ability. Each pupil has a key worker who meets them individually and advocates on their behalf to ensure their opinions are known. Pupils are involved in the school council where they can put forward their views in a more formal setting. Pupils thrive, develop confidence and self-esteem knowing their views and opinions are important and that staff listen and appreciate them as unique individuals. Although they also have an independent visitor who can advocate on behalf of them about any issue, her visits are infrequent and as a result pupils are not able to develop a trusting relationship with her.

Individual health and well-being profiles highlight all young people's medical and health needs. Their medical needs have a high priority. Liaison with the internal nursing professionals ensures that pupils receive the specialist support they require. Systems for the administration of medication are robust. Nursing staff are well-trained to manage medication safely and managers regularly audit the process to monitor safe practice.

Staff organise structured activities for pupils with a focus on physical activities to promote their well-being. Community experiences such as the seaside, Scouts and Guides and trips to the local park provide opportunities for healthy leisure pursuits. Some activities show a lack of innovative thinking and have been adapted to accommodate staff absences. Overall, activities expand their social experiences and provide opportunities for developing appropriate social skills and confidence. In addition, staff promote pupils' individual interests ensuring they participate in activities they enjoy.

Mealtimes are orderly, social occasions where residential pupils sit together with staff and talk about their day. Catering arrangements are good. Food is plentiful and individual diets are catered for.

Residential pupils stay in good standard accommodation. They like their bedrooms and personalise their own spaces. For example, pupils help to choose their own duvet sets and pictures for their walls. Some children display their own artwork or have pictures of family and friends around them. This creates a colourful and unique space for each child. The school has a rolling programme of redecoration for the residential area. Communal areas including bathrooms and toilet areas have also been decorated and specialist equipment has been added.

Parents report extremely positively on the school and the residential provision. One

commented that 'staff are very knowledgeable and understanding' and another that staff 'understand her individual needs'.

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

**Good**

All staff are acutely aware of pupils' vulnerability and staff responsibility for ensuring safety. Pupils are happy and relaxed in the residential environment. Parents report they have no concerns about their child's safety. Some individual risk assessments linked to behaviour management plans lack the prescriptive guidance needed by staff. As a consequence this results in inconsistent approaches by staff.

Staff are well trained in the use of physical restraint techniques and rely more upon de-escalation methods. Comments from staff include, 'it has got to be an absolute last resort'. The use of physical restraint is extremely rare within the residential provision. It is used in accordance with the school's behaviour management guidance. There are examples of incomplete written records following the imposition of major sanctions of young people. This shortfall restricts the ability of senior managers to robustly examine potential patterns and trends, and take appropriate action.

Staff are well-trained and confident in their safeguarding role. They have the necessary understanding of current issues that can pose risks to students such as child sexual exploitation, e-safety and radicalisation. The designated safeguarding officer leads a safeguarding team which considers all concerns referred by staff. Appropriate action is taken including consultation with and referral to, external agencies.

Staff members diligently implement pupil's safeguarding protocols and care plans. They say this is particularly necessary to ensure the safety of the pupils; particularly those whose complex needs and disabilities make them increasingly vulnerable. Staff say, 'if you can't communicate or have physical disabilities, you are at a much higher risk. We always use two staff when assisting pupils with their personal care needs'.

There have been no incidents involving pupils leaving the residential provision without permission. Appropriate measures are in place to protect pupils who are at high risk if they leave the premises without staff support, including liaison with the local police in line with local authority protocols.

The extensive buildings and grounds of the school typically provide safety and security for the pupils. One specific area within the grounds of the school has been an ongoing issue with neighbours to the school and the Local Authority. The head teacher reports that attempts are being made to reach a compromise. A dedicated maintenance team conducts regular health and safety checks and responds swiftly to repair and maintenance requests. The school is working in close liaison with a fire and safety company in response to a fire audit, completed in 2015. This highlighted that a number of areas of improvement were required. All technical requirements have now been met. Personal evacuation plans for all residential pupils are completed and records demonstrate all fire safety checks remain up-to-date.

Robust recruitment processes serve to protect the pupils from potentially unsafe adults. Core checks and references are completed before new staff members join the school.

Visitors are diligently monitored.

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

**Good**

The head teacher is passionately committed to providing high standards of individualised education and care for pupils and senior leaders share this dedication. The head of care is part of the senior leadership team, who view the residential provision as an integral and valuable aspect of the school. The care staff team support the work of education staff in implementing specific strategies to support residential pupils. Pupils benefit enormously from this truly multi-disciplinary approach to their education and care.

Appropriate staffing levels are routinely implemented to meet the needs of the pupils. There are occasional shortages as a result of staff absences but good contingency planning means that agency staff are not used promoting consistency for young people. This is positive but a more pro-active approach would ensure that activities are only adapted or repeated in extreme circumstances

Training and development of staff is prioritised to ensure all staff understand learning disabilities and have the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively support pupils and promote positive outcomes. The appraisal and supervision process to manage staff performance ensures they understand their role, have clear objectives and training to support pupil's progress and achievement.

Six new care staff have been recruited to work in the residential provision since the last inspection. New members of staff receive a thorough induction including high levels of support which includes knowledge about the whole school provision. They quickly understand everyone's roles and responsibilities and how these impact upon their own job role. All members of the residential staff team, including waking night staff, have completed, or are studying for Level 3 Diplomas. A team of staff who strives to maintain their competence, skills and expertise provide good quality support to pupils.

The governing body provides support and effective challenge to senior leaders. This governing body is growing in new membership and is beginning to have an impact. Governors conduct unannounced visits to the residential provision and produce reports which focus upon areas to improve. Some areas required to be monitored by the governors are not being reported upon and an evaluation of what they have seen is sometimes missing. The school was asked following the last inspection, to ensure that staff had the opportunity to meet with the governors to talk about their experiences about the residential provision. This has happened on one occasion in January and has not become embedded practice in the school. The advice, therefore, has been repeated as an area of improvement. The school is aware of its strengths and weaknesses. Clear and measurable development plans are under continuing monitoring and review.

Residential pupils live in a caring, energetic, lively, supportive and child-centred environment. Staff work cohesively with families and other professionals to address young people's individual needs. Staff work to resolve issues and anxiety with pupils in a non-punitive way. They work through difficulties and challenges patiently, supportively



and positively, recognising the needs of pupils and ensuring those needs are put first, addressed and then met.

## 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.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	119861
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC058077
<b>DfE registration number</b>	

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>	14
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	12 to19
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kairen Dexter
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	15/01/2015
<b>Telephone number</b>	01524 701217
<b>Email address</b>	head@bleasdaleschool.lancs.sch.uk

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