

Wolverdene Special School

Wolverdene School, 22 Love Lane, ANDOVER, Hampshire, SP10 2AF

Inspection dates	08/02/2016 to 10/02/2016	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Good	2
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

- Children are given opportunities to express their feelings and emotions in the knowledge that they are listened to and supported in a positive way.
- Through observation, it is evident children experience a sense of feeling safe. Staff balance the need for children to have choices with their need for clear boundaries that help them feel safe.
- The children benefit massively from the residential experience, which has a highly positive impact on children's educational and social development. Parental feedback is highly complimentary about the difference the residential provision makes.
- Children are at the centre of practice. Staff focus on individual needs and wishes of the children. Relationships formed are nurturing, professional and trusting. Children describe the staff as 'great' and 'fun'.
- Children are given the opportunity to play and be children; this is achieved by staff in a nurturing but not risk adverse way.
- Staff demonstrate a thorough understanding of the individual needs of each child, working consistently to support them to reflect and learn from the way they may feel.
- The leadership and management of the residential house is highly effective. Managers know the school's strengths and are continually looking at areas for development.

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?

- Ensure all issues relating to diversity are fully explored in the care planning documentation available to staff.
- Ensure that the school's recruitment process consistently follows best practice.
- Ensure all key staff involved in recruitment undertake appropriate training.
- Arrange training for the independent visitor to enable them to make an informed and accurate judgement on the quality of care and how well children are safeguarded.
- Review the systems for recording measures of control and discipline to ensure children's views are consistently and comprehensively recorded.
- Undertake a review of reports produced by independent visitors with a view to incorporating greater evaluation into the findings.

Information about this inspection

The inspection was announced to the headteacher on the morning of the first day of the inspection. An initial meeting was held with the head of care and headteacher.

Discussions with care staff, senior leadership team, maintenance, therapy team and the chair of governors took place. Inspectors met with children and the senior management and staff teams. Phone calls were made to parents and a discussion took place with a visiting parent. A vast array of records and documentation were inspected and assessed. Meals were taken with children and a range of activities were observed.

Inspection team

Emeline Evans

Lead social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

Wolverdene is a local authority school within Hampshire catering for primary age children experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school provides mainly day placements, but 10 weekly residential placements are available for boys within The Lodge, which is a separate unit located within the school grounds. The Lodge accommodation consists of ten single rooms with shared facilities.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

Children 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. Comments from parents included: 'he has made progress, especially socially' and 'the school is brilliant, I feel they are managing his needs well.'

Children enjoy the residential experience and are very positive about the care and support that they receive from all staff. Relationships between staff and the children are excellent with children beginning to form secure attachments; this is enabling them to feel safe and explore their feelings. They are encouraged by staff to develop personal interests. Children develop well-rounded interests and are empowered to achieve their full potential. The range of opportunities and activities that are offered promotes each child's development. Children commented, 'we get to do lots of great things together.'

Extensive work is undertaken engaging children in meaningful discussions and activities regarding personal safety. This ranges across children's understanding of internet safety and safety in the community, a better awareness of bullying and living in a group environment. The children have great trust in the staff team and as a result, they are confident in speaking to staff, and more able to let go of past negative experiences. Children are supported in a sensitive manner to move forward with a more positive outlook and a sense of value and self-worth.

There are formal and informal systems for children to have a voice across the school and there is a representative from the residential house on the school council to ensure they are heard. The availability of staff enables children's voices to be heard informally on a daily basis with prompt responses from staff.

Children are part of an integrated school community that includes residential, education and therapy. There are sound relationships between the teams in the school and with the children. This enables a holistic approach to be achieved.

Staff and children celebrate achievements and each child has their own individual goals, this assists children to understand and value their achievements. A huge variety of ways are made available to ensure all children can make progress which are built seamlessly into the everyday life of the school.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

The quality of the care and support in the school's residential provision is outstanding. Children experience a very personalised and rewarding time. Comments from children include, 'it's great here we have a lot of fun,' and 'I would give it 10 out of 10.' Individual attention to detail is incorporated into every child's day. The staff team know the

children extremely well and deliver consistently high quality care. Their practice is sensitive and professional and children respond well to the supportive and nurturing approach. Parents spoken to were overwhelmingly positive about the level of care being provided in the residential house.

The care provision is integrated across the whole school. The multi-disciplinary approach ensures children receive the correct input from the most appropriate professional. In addition, there are successful links between education and residential staff through formal and informal daily meetings.

Staff are active listeners and are quick in responding in a supportive and reflective manner to children, including to the often unpredictable behaviours through which they may express their needs. This approach helps alleviate any unnecessary anxiety for children and supports them in communicating their needs more coherently. Staff determination and persistency help each child to secure the maximum benefit in their time in the residential house.

Children report that staff listen to them and there is someone available to talk with; their opinions are valued. There are opportunities to be involved in regular house meetings; staff are successful in fully engaging them in this process. They have members of staff and adults to whom they can voice their thoughts and feelings. Children are able to speak out as individuals or as groups and able to influence choices such as activities and meals. They are empowered to make choices and this enhances their self-esteem.

Admission to the residential house is carefully considered to ensure the individual needs of each child can be met. Thorough initial assessments across departments help to inform individual plans for addressing the needs of each child. A well designed induction process allows children an important opportunity to learn about the school and each other. All people involved in the child's life are fully integrated into this process to ensure children's emotional and social development is paramount. A number of team building exercises, including camping trips, further promote the strong sense of community.

Young people's placement plans and identified targets are monitored periodically for effectiveness and appropriateness. They are up to date and detailed. However not all issues relating to ethnicity and diversity are fully explored in the documentation available to staff. This does not enable staff to know what support young people may require to develop a sense of their own identity.

Healthy lifestyles are actively promoted within the residential house. All individual dietary needs are catered for. Children say they enjoy the meals with a good selection of home cooked meals available. Mealtimes are well organised with the children eating together creating a relaxed and important aspect of the day. The range of physical activities enables children to keep fit and children are learning what is required to keep themselves fit and healthy. There are various links to support children's psychological and mental health. There is an emphasis on addressing their emotional well-being. Medical support and management is of a very good standard with arrangements being constantly reviewed to improve practice and provides a very high standard of safety, oversight and robustness.

The residential areas are comfortable and the management team is working with the governors on their development plans, for example to improve the bathrooms. However, due to budgetary restraints this has been delayed. A range of communal areas enables children to have space if required but still gives a sense of belonging to the group. Children are able to personalise their bedrooms and bring belongings with them, this enables them to feel comfortable and secure in the environment.

Children enjoy a range of activities and readily engage in new experiences. Activities reflect children's interests. The types of activities they take part in are purposeful. This in turn enables them to develop skills and, at times, challenge themselves. These opportunities increase children's self-esteem and confidence, which many lacked prior to taking up residential placements at the school.

Children are able to contact families by using the house telephones. Contact is supported and encouraged by the staff to ensure children are able to speak to parents 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.

How well children and young people are protected

Good

Safeguarding arrangements within the residential provision are good. Children say they feel safe and are kept safe by staff who are knowledgeable about the safeguarding policies and procedures and how to implement them in practice. The designated senior staff member who takes responsibility for child protection has 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 provide a good audit trail, demonstrating how procedures have been followed and practice reviewed in the light of an incident. Information is available to enable everyone to be aware of risks and appropriate strategies to minimise them.

Children do not identify bullying as an issue. Minor matters such as name calling or teasing are dealt with effectively through one-to-one or group work in a restorative way. The 'whole school' approach involves staff from all sectors of the school including care, education and therapists; this works exceptionally well in observing and acting on unusual or inappropriate behaviours. This seamless style of working contributes to an environment which is non-judgemental and provides a safe space for children with complex needs who at times, are unable to communicate their needs in socially acceptable ways. Children are aware of how to raise any concerns or grumbles and this is encouraged by the staff team to ensure children are heard and any concerns acted upon. There is a culture of openness where staff and children work together to resolve any differences of opinion.

Children are beginning on the journey in recognising that at times, their behaviours are not safe or appropriate and staff need to step in to ensure they are helped to recognise this. Staff are very proactive in diffusing situations and recognise indicators when

children are struggling in the group. Children are constantly given options prior to them reacting in a negative way. There is a consistent approach to care with effective role modelling in place. On a rare occasion, incidents of restraint have taken place as a last resort. Records following a physical intervention are detailed; however, young people's views following these interventions are not consistently and comprehensively recorded. Senior staff are in the process of implementing de-brief forms however, these are not in operation and to enable the evaluation of the effectiveness of all interventions these need to cross reference to the records. A rewards and consequences system operates across all aspects of school life and celebrating the success of children is an integral and important aspect of life here.

There has not been any instances of any residential children missing or going off site. There are policies in place and staff are aware of the action to take should this occur and take the necessary paperwork with them on outings. High staffing levels reduce the risk of this occurring. Children are given various opportunities to discuss how to keep themselves safe and staff re-iterate this through general and more formal conversations. Children readily contribute to these discussions and learn from them.

There is generally careful selection and vetting of staff who work with the children. However, the school could not demonstrate consistent good practice with regard to identifying gaps in employment within application forms. Audit trails are weak and do not demonstrate decision making. In addition, those responsible have not received training in safer recruitment. This does not ensure that their skills are up to date and they are kept abreast of best practice.

Health and safety within the residential provision is well managed with effective oversight by the senior management team. 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.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good

A very experienced team of senior leaders oversee the running of the school and the residential provision. The leaders of the residential provision work collaboratively with the education and therapy teams. This results in a whole school approach to the care and education of each individual child.

The senior team are ambitious in promoting positive experiences for all children who come into the school. They are able to recognise the impact the residential experience has had on the children and how they have progressed given their starting points. They lead by example and use all the necessary recourses to ensure they fulfil their aims of a nurturing environment.

There are sufficient staff deployed to meet the needs of the children. Staff report regular

supervision to ensure they have the necessary support. A good training programme ensures staff are confident in their roles and that skills remain in line with current practice. Training is provided to reflect the needs of children. Staff attend specialist courses when necessary.

Children enjoy spending time with staff and accessing the residential house. The staff team is passionate about their work with residential children and demonstrate this through their conduct, professional approach and knowledge of each child's needs. Staff say that they enjoy their work and equally, children say they enjoy being with staff. The dynamics of the staff team ensure that children's' needs are communicated and acted upon efficiently and respectfully.

The residential provision is at the heart of the school. Staff, parents and children are extremely complimentary about the value of the residential house and its contribution to children's personal, social and academic development. One parent said, 'it's a great service and I don't know where I would be without it'. The staff team is experienced and enthusiastic.

The management team has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision, and are constantly seeking ways in which to improve children's experiences.

The school made an accurate self-evaluation of its performance and is keen to develop further. Monitoring visits are undertaken by a governor, with reports submitted to leaders and the rest of the governing body. Reports from this independent visitor do not provide substantial challenge and insight into practice. For example, the reports confirm what records or processes have been sampled, but there is no further information about the impact or value of these findings in relation to outcomes for residential children. The independent visitor has not received any training relevant to this role to enable them to make an informed and accurate judgement on the quality of care and how well children are safeguarded.

The school has not received any formal complaints since the last inspection. Staff are in regular contact with parents and matters of a minor nature are dealt with efficiently and promptly. The complaints process is comprehensive and widely available to parents, children and significant others. There is a culture of openness where any grumbles or concerns are discussed and acted upon in a reflective manner.

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

Unique reference number	116635
Social care unique reference number	SC012029
DfE registration number	

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	Residential Special School
Number of boarders on roll	13
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	6 to11
Headteacher	Mr Paul Van Walwyk
Date of previous boarding inspection	25/03/2015
Telephone number	01264 362350
Email address	adminoffice@wolverdene.hants.sch.uk

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