

# West Kirby Residential School

West Kirby Residential School, 107-119 Meols Drive, West Kirby, WIRRAL, Merseyside, CH48 5DH

<b>Inspection dates</b>	16/03/2015 to 18/03/2015	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is good because

- The senior management team supported by a strong governing body show a positive commitment to driving forward improvements to enhance the care and welfare of the pupils. Some areas requiring improvement have been identified and these relate to the quality of monitoring of some records, consistency of supervision of staff with specialist roles, and the consistency of detail provided in records of restraint. No shortfall affects the welfare of pupils.
- The school continues to be an example of residential provision that stands out as a beacon for equality and diversity. There are increasing opportunities for pupils to grow in confidence and independence. An exceptional arrangement for the provision of an integrated, whole school approach enables residential pupils to experience success in every aspect of their lives.
- Residential pupils enjoy excellent relationships with staff who provide a nurturing, caring and fun environment in the comfortable and diverse residential units.
- Residential pupils make exceptional progress in their social lives as a result of their experiences in the residential units. They learn strategies to manage their feelings and behaviour, and learn about friendship.
- Staff work well with parents and other professionals, to provide integrated and individualised packages of care that address the needs of residential pupils in a holistic and progressive way. Key workers involve residential pupils in identifying goals and reviewing their care plans, so that they can celebrate the progress they make.

### 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 school was contacted on the morning of day one by the lead inspector to announce the inspection.

The inspection took place over three days with interim feedback provided on day two and final feedback provided on the afternoon of day three.

During the inspection records and documentation were examined.

Interviews took place with the residential pupils, head of care, principal, parent, governors, staff, child protection lead, nurse and behaviour support coordinator to secure their views upon the quality of care provided.

A tour of the premises and grounds was undertaken.

Evening activities were also observed over one extended evening. A visit was made to each residential unit including two community houses. All resident pupils were spoken with or observed.

## Inspection team

Denise Jolly

Lead social care inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

West Kirby Residential School is a non-maintained special educational needs college for young people, many of whom are on the Autistic Spectrum and others with complex and significant emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. Many young people also have additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

There are currently 94 pupils on roll aged from 8 years to over 16 years; of these 75 are boys and 19 are girls. The school currently is providing residential places for up to 21 young people during weekdays in term time. There is a variety of boarding arrangements available depending on the needs of the child, ranging from one to four nights each week. The school provides residential accommodation on the main site and in two houses in the local area. The residential provision was last inspected on the 28th February 2014.

The location of the school and the houses enables young people to access facilities in the community easily. They are close to bus stops, a train station, leisure centres, swimming pools, youth clubs, shops, the beach, parks and other schools.

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

- further enhance monitoring of records specified in Appendix 2, to identify and address all gaps in records of actions and decisions made about staff recruitment procedures and any child protection allegations
- oversee arrangements to ensure the regular supervision of staff who have key roles in school, such as the nurse and child protection lead
- enhance records of physical intervention to consistently provide sufficient detail that enables managers to assess the suitability of staff actions and conduct.

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

### Outstanding

Residential pupils significantly improve their self-esteem and confidence because of their residential experience. For example, some pupils who previously attended other schools felt bullied, or were withdrawn and unsociable. Since their admission to the school and staying at the residential unit pupils have developed a greater ability to make friends. They describe themselves as feeling more accepted and therefore more willing to get to know other pupils. They live in a caring social community where they develop trust in each other. Friendships have flourished; older pupils show concern and consideration for younger pupils and a strong bond has developed between some. One young person said, 'I like it here because I get to be the role model, instead of being the one who is a bit odd.'

Pupils enjoy their time in the residential unit and feel comfortable in the safe surroundings of the wider school. They show an exceptional improvement in independence and self-esteem, according to their starting points. Many pupils spoke proudly of their achievements in cooking, doing their laundry, mastering their self-care routines and the prestige of being able to travel independently. They enjoy active participation in a wide range of community based social activities from martial arts to drama groups or cooking and shopping. The multi-disciplinary team identifies their learning and support needs, and devises strategies so that they continue to participate in wide ranging and demanding activities. This is an excellent example of equality and diversity.

The behaviour of the residential pupils improves significantly during their time in residence. Through the empathetic and calm approach taken by staff the residential pupils have, over time, learned how to modify the way they respond to situations in which they previously reacted with anxiety, anger and frustration. Residential pupils feel valued by staff and it is evident that they make steady progress in becoming more tolerant of their peers and other adults. They learn about acceptable behaviour in public settings. They respond well to the care and guidance of the staff. Staff said, 'The most important thing, and what parents want most, is for the children to be able to do family things like eating at a table, or going to the shops without huge upset. We work on these things every day.' Residential pupils enthusiastically describe the residential resource as, 'brilliant, life-changing, outstanding, and a place where I can be helped.'

Pupils are actively involved in the life of each of the residential units through regular group meetings, individual meetings with their key workers, and discussions with governors and managers. All take their views seriously. Pupils learn how to negotiate and listen to others when making decisions such as choice of décor, menus or activities. Staff are skilled at ensuring all pupils contribute to group discussion. They promote each pupil's skills and qualities, such as who makes great cakes, or who could help with painting a lounge. This promotes their sense of responsibility and ownership in the life of the residence.

The residential pupils are encouraged to take an interest in their health and fitness. They choose their favourite sport activity, and participate in group and solo activities from dance to basketball or rock climbing. They are fully engaged in discussions about how to eat more healthily and explore how to create balanced meals by being responsible for menu planning. The school nurse and healthcare assistant based at the school ensure that the arrangements for promoting and maintaining the physical, emotional and psychological health of the residential pupils are highly effective.

Through their residential experience pupils learn important personal skills. Parents are very positive about the impact of the residential unit on their children. One parent said, 'We can see the difference year to year. We would never have believed we could take our son out with us.'

With the right approach, we can go out for a meal, take him shopping, and he has improved his relationship with his sister. He has improved because staff know what they are doing and help us to get it right too.' Residential pupils learn and practice significant life skills that enhance their ability to cope with the world. They are able to access learning across a range of areas from formal education to life skills because they are helped to improve their communication and manage their anxiety and frustration.

## **Quality of residential provision and care**

## **Outstanding**

The care provided to the residential pupils is of an exceptionally high standard. Pupils have access to an experienced and very stable team of care staff who know them very well. The staff are responsible for the pastoral care of the pupils. This means that the pupils are able to share their personal thoughts and any concerns at any time. They say that staff always listen to them. Care staff demonstrate a positive enthusiasm for their work in the residential units. They are very active in supporting the residential pupils to enjoy life at the school.

Plans to introduce new pupils to the residence are carried out with utmost sensitivity and as a result of discussions with the parents and the child. The school is reviewing the assessment procedures for prospective residential pupils to ensure they will fit in with the other pupils who use the unit. This is to ensure that the pupil can gain the maximum experience from the unique resources of each residential unit, including the community houses. Once settled in, pupils contribute to discussions about where they would like to spend their time. They move between resources when it is appropriate to do so, and pupils say that this helps them to see the progress they are making.

Care plans are informative, and detailed. Managers regularly update the systems used for relevance and effectiveness. For example, current updates reflect placing authority changes in joint education and health plans. Key workers focus on safeguarding; behaviour and communication support; raising self-confidence; promoting diversity and independence skills on an individualised basis. Young people agree their plans and sign to say that they agree with the targets set for their personal development. A positive strength of the school is lively communication between the residential unit and school.

All staff consistently aim high for pupils and help them to achieve their best. The recording of each pupil's progress is evaluative and includes their views. If pupils disagree with their targets or staff views, they are happy to say so, and expect this to be recorded. One pupil said, 'Staff don't make any decision without consulting me. Sometimes I don't think they are right, but they explain why they are making that decision, and usually my mum agrees with them!' The partnership approach between care and teaching staff and families provides consistency for pupils. This supports their personal and academic development. Residential pupils' achievements are celebrated throughout the school with a range of certificates, photographs and examples of paintings and other work on display. Staff are knowledgeable about individual pupil's needs. The provision of residential care is effectively organised to complement the interests and achievements of the pupils.

Staff create a nurturing environment where pupils are encouraged to do their best within their capabilities. For some, this means that they pursue science projects or learn new languages, while others learn to peel vegetables or explore sensory play. One young person said that he had a musical show to perform with his community performing arts group, and that staff and some pupils were coming to watch him. Because staff approach each pupil as having equal and important needs, pupils learn about tolerance and acceptance of difference. This is highly significant for pupils with autism spectrum needs, because it is hard for them to demonstrate empathy. The school has an ethos of valuing pupils and this creates a culture of respect. The development of self-esteem and self-worth in all pupils is strongly and actively promoted. One

pupil said, 'Staff have been really good at helping me to explore my sexuality. They don't judge, and help me to put things into perspective.' This approach underpins and values the unique qualities of individuals, and improves their sense of well-being.

The school nurse and healthcare assistant work very effectively, in partnership with pupils, parents and health professionals. The nurse has implemented revised procedures for the safe administration of medicines. She has reviewed all health policies, to ensure they reflect best practice. She trains and monitors staff competence in safely administering medication and first aid to pupils. Where appropriate, staff support young people to learn to administer their own medication. This ensures that pupils have all their health needs appropriately met.

The residential accommodation provides the pupils with a safe and comfortable environment to enjoy their stay. Pupils have single bedrooms which they personalise with posters and photographs as they wish. There is plenty of space for pupils to enjoy communal lounges and dining areas, and pupils enjoy the sociability of using the whole school premises with day pupils who stay for extended days, or participate in the wide range of after school clubs. Staff are mindful of improving the quality of residential accommodation and a refurbishment programme has provided new sofas and replaced some curtains and blinds. Where possible, pupils help staff to redecorate communal areas, and choose soft furnishings. The girls have recently requested, sourced and purchased sensory items such as weighted blankets and fibre-optic lamps. The community houses are very cosy, and blend well into the local area. The residential provision is clean, comfortable and homely. It allows pupils to move confidently, safely and freely within it.

Parents are very positive about the quality of care provided for their children, and write letters and cards to show their appreciation of the service. They say that it is easy to contact the school and share their concerns or anxieties with the home-school liaison officer. School governors who conduct unannounced visits said, 'There is no doubt the staff are very committed to the children. We see the huge improvements in the pupils, some of them are so much more sociable and confident.'

### **Residential pupils' safety**

### **Good**

Staff take great care to ensure the safety of all the pupils. Managers follow comprehensive recruitment and selection procedures to ensure that only staff who are suitable to work with residential pupils are appointed. Not all personnel files have a clear audit trail of checks and decisions, although the information is available elsewhere in the school. All staff have been appropriately trained in safeguarding and regular updates include training from the local authority protection professionals. They have a clear understanding of their responsibilities to ensure that the residential pupils are cared for in a safe environment. The safeguarding lead for the school ensures that any matter of concern is appropriately escalated to professionals outside of school, to enable all matters to be addressed promptly. This enhances the safety and wellbeing of all pupils. Records do not consistently provide accurate, chronological accounts of all decisions and actions taken and this reduces the efficiency with which the school is able to provide information to those who independently evaluate the suitability of actions taken. This occasional shortfall has not impaired the actions taken to protect children.

There are clear risk management systems in place for the buildings and grounds. Residential pupils are kept safe through robust checks on all fire-safety equipment and through regular practice of fire evacuation procedures. Pupils benefit from whole school risk assessments that clearly define their vulnerabilities and identify strategies to minimise the risks to their and other's safety and welfare. For example, highly effective systems are in place to enable pupils to learn to travel independently in the community. The multi-disciplinary team carefully prepares pupils who demonstrate the capacity to learn road safety awareness. They follow a programme of small steps, eventually reaching independence. Staff continue to spot check pupil's competence and

reassess risk if pupils are considered to have created 'near miss' situations. Key workers support pupils to explore and identify for themselves what went wrong, so that their learning is personalised. This proportionate and enabling approach to risk means that young people develop their own mechanisms and habits to help them to stay safe.

All staff are trained in behaviour management, and this is being refreshed according to appropriate timescales. They use positive and proactive strategies to defuse any disruptive behaviour. The whole-school approach to behaviour is dedicated to enabling pupils to take responsibility for their choices and learn that their actions affect others. This has been very successful in reducing all aspects of unwanted behaviour. Staff intervention has decreased as young people adopt strategies to manage their feelings and frustrations, such as asking for time-out to calm down, or using breathing techniques to reduce upset. Restraint is rarely used within the residential unit and staff are competent in using de-escalation techniques to manage any behaviours effectively. A dedicated behaviour support team carefully analyses the effectiveness of the behaviour approach used in the school and oversees all incidents and staff disciplinary measures. On occasion, records of restraint do not carry all the detail required to assess staff actions and this inhibits the school's capacity to address all shortfalls to ensure staff operate safely and effectively. Staff participate in refresher training of restrictive holds, should problems be identified following any restraint. Sanctions are rarely applied because staff are highly skilled in promoting positive relationships and choices.

Residential pupils say that bullying is not an issue. Incidents of bullying have reduced in line with how well staff work with pupils to help them to understand the nature of safe and positive relationships. One pupil said, 'I am shy because I used to be bullied at my old school. Now I don't feel afraid, and so I think I will be able to make some friends soon.' However, if any relationship issues are identified, the staff act quickly. Because some pupils learn best from visual examples and conversation staff model very high standards in the way they speak and act towards each other and pupils. This reinforces their learning about how to manage relationships.

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

The head of care supported by two senior staff competently manages the residential facility. The management team demonstrate commitment to excellence in the operations of the residential unit. The statement of the principles and ethos of the school has a positive emphasis on the value of the residential unit as an integral part of the whole school. There is an open culture encouraged by the principal and other managers where everyone has a stake in the success of the school and all views are welcome. Pupils are proud of their achievements and positive progress and parents praise the school for the positive impact on their child's development.

The head of care and senior residential staff conduct performance monitoring of the residential unit. This informs the principal's annual report to the board of governors. There are strong links between the care and teaching staff and this contributes positively to the achievements of the pupils. The principal is positive about the need to continually review services with a view to improved outcomes for the pupils. Being resident plays an important role in the overall aim of encouraging pupils to achieve their potential both socially and educationally. For example, residential pupils learn about the importance of good routines to help them get to school on time. They develop techniques to self-regulate their anxieties and frustrations. This helps them to remain in the classroom and therefore access the important educational opportunities available to them.

Staff are enthusiastic, competent and demonstrate a professional commitment to their work. There are always sufficient staff available at all times to ensure the efficient operation of the unit and to meet the care needs of the residential pupils. All care staff are trained to the required level in order to carry out their roles and responsibilities. The management of the school is committed

to ensuring care staff are supported to develop their skills through regular supervision and training. All staff receive annual appraisal and work to achieve identified targets throughout the year. Some inconsistency has developed in the supervision arrangements for those with specialist roles, such as the nurse and the child protection lead for the school. While this has not affected the welfare of pupils, it limits opportunities for those staff to reflect on their practice and identify and address professional development needs on a regular basis. Weekly meetings of senior managers and staff teams are used to successfully communicate emerging concepts and projects to residential staff to ensure they remain fully involved in whole school development. For example, staff are able to contribute to discussions about how to develop a new care plan structure to improve child-centred planning and review.

Records are generally well maintained. Inconsistency in monitoring of some records has resulted in some shortfalls identified during this inspection, particularly in relation to ensuring there are well organised records that provide clear audit trails for actions and decisions regarding managing allegations and staff recruitment processes. This shortfall was largely rectified during the inspection as paperwork was pulled together from various sources. Once complete, the records provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the school had acted appropriately in both cases.

The governors are active in supporting the school. They undertake regular unannounced visits to the residence and write about their findings. Their reports are extremely detailed and are an invaluable aspect of monitoring of the residential provision. Governors record the views of young people, their observations of relationships within the home and the quality of records about the lives of pupils. The pupil's voice and experience is at the centre of their writing. They demonstrate that the governors have exceptionally high expectations for the residential service provided. This external scrutiny identifies strengths and areas for development that are acted upon to enhance the quality of care for pupils.

The school has developed positive relationships with parents who trust the staff to care for their children. The principal and home school liaison officer work closely with external professionals to ensure placements support pupil development. Care staff attend annual reviews of progress for pupils and provide clear accounts of how pupils have benefitted from the residential experience.

Pupils value their time in the residential service. There is excellent rapport between staff and residential pupils. There is universal approval for staff. Pupils say, 'staff are kind', 'staff know how to help me', and 'my mum says my keyworker is just like part of our family.'



## 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>	105137
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC018958
<b>DfE registration number</b>	344/7015

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>	
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	20
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	9 to 17
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr G W Williams
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	25/02/2014
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 632 3201
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