

Wennington Hall School

Wennington Hall School, Lodge Lane, Wennington, Lancaster, LA2 8NS

Inspection dates	1 March 2016 to 3 March 2016	
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	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- Residential pupils flourish in a caring, nurturing environment. They continue to make excellent progress in managing their own behaviour and are making significant strides in their quest for independence. Residential pupils feel valued as staff listen to them and respond to their requests.
- Residential students' safety and well-being is of paramount importance. They are safe and say that they feel safe because of the effectively implemented safeguarding procedures. Dynamic risk assessment enables residential pupils to take safe risks.
- Pupils enjoy an extremely wide range of activities that actively engage their interests, enabling them to gain new skills and increase in confidence and self-esteem. Pupils are rightly proud of their achievements, such as building a 'green car' and taking part in motorbike and BMX bike races.
- The school continues to be an example of residential provision that stands out as a beacon of equality and diversity. This means that all pupils have a strong voice in school and are heard.
- The school works exceptionally well with other schools, young offenders' institutions and army barracks to help to promote healthy living and smoking cessation.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and say that they 'trust them' with

their children and can see the 'massive difference' that being here has made to their children.

- The school is exceptionally well managed by a highly committed, enthusiastic, and dedicated staff team. Residence is an integral part of the school and is valued highly by senior managers and governors. There are some minor shortfalls in the monitoring and the clarity of recording in some areas. No shortfalls affect the welfare of pupils.

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?

- Enhance further the monitoring systems to ensure that robust evaluation and scrutiny of information contained in particular records are sufficiently detailed.
- Enhance further the recording of information in students' records to provide greater clarity in particular with regard to sanctions, health-care plan and disposal of drugs.

Information about this inspection

The school was contacted on the afternoon of the day before the inspection by the lead inspector to announce the inspection. This was because a section 8 visit led by an HMI was also taking place.

The inspection took place over three days, with feedback provided on the afternoon of day three. During the inspection, records and documentation were examined.

Interviews took place with the residential pupils, headteacher, care staff, parents, parent governor, and school staff, to secure their views on the quality of care provided. A tour of the premises and grounds was undertaken. Evening activities were also observed over two nights.

Inspection team

Chris Scully
Paul Gillespie

Lead social care inspector
Team inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

A local authority administers the school. The school provides an environment that can support approximately 80 boys of secondary school age, from 11 to 16 years old, on a residential or day basis. Pupils using the services provided at the school have experienced some difficulties associated with their academic, social, emotional or behavioural development, which make mainstream schooling inappropriate for them at the present time. The school provides a 38-week programme of education with residential pupils, in the main, spending weekends at home or with their carers. There are currently 49 residential pupils. They live in five houses located within the school grounds. The school was last inspected in December 2014.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

The outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Residential pupils enjoy high quality relationships with their peers and staff. These are built upon honesty, trust and mutual respect. They thoroughly enjoy one another's company. They are tolerant of each other's personalities and clearly understand that everyone has different needs. Residential pupils say that they 'love it' here. They engage in lively banter with staff. They are confident to tell visitors what a positive difference being here has made to their lives.

They succeed because they live in a highly inclusive setting where their individuality is recognised, supported, and celebrated. As a result, residential pupils make excellent progress across all areas of their personal, social, and emotional development. Residential pupils are able to access an extensive range of services and therapies to help them to overcome any difficulties that they may be facing. As a consequence, they have much more confidence in their own abilities and increased self-esteem.

Staff have an innate understanding of each pupil's individual needs, and the support and encouragement that they need to succeed. Pupils are making excellent progress in relation to their starting points. Pupils are extremely proud of their achievements and said that they have more confidence in what they can do, for example singing a solo at the carol concert, and helping younger pupils to settle in. One boy said, 'I can now read, and I enjoy it.'

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 ways in which they respond to situations to which they previously reacted with anxiety, anger and frustration. Pupils understand the 'Wennington way' and respond well to its order and structure. 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 respond exceptionally well to the care and guidance of the staff.

Health promotion is a key strength. Young people are encouraged to learn and make healthier lifestyle choices, whether those be through innovative approaches to ceasing smoking or through understanding the risks associated with drug and substance misuse, for example legal highs or cannabis. The school has become a front-runner in supporting other establishments to set up programmes to educate their pupils. Records of any incidents of drugs being brought into school are kept but are not always sufficiently detailed as to what was found and how it was disposed of. Similarly, health-care plans do not always reflect all of the pupils' health issues and the action taken by staff to address these. These are recording issues and do not affect the care provided.

Residential pupils are at the heart of everything that the school does. Their 'voices' are strong in school and are actively listened to. House meetings are lively affairs at which pupils organise the meals in the houses and their group activities. They feel empowered,

valued and respected, because they know that their views are listened to and acted on.

There are excellent opportunities for pupils to engage in a wide range of activities. These are integral to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) programme that is embedded 24 hours a day and that provides opportunities for the pupils to grow and learn by experiencing things that they would not normally do. Examples include motor cross, backwoods experiences, sailing, rafting and knitting. These opportunities enable children and young people to engage in their interests and to build up a raft of skills that will enable them to move on into adulthood. In addition, they help them to further their career opportunities, whether these be as recording artists or performers, or to pass the fitness test to join the armed forces.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

The quality of care and support provided to residential pupils is outstanding. Induction of children and young people into residence is a strength of the school. It is very well managed and coordinated. It ensures that children's and young people's introductions are thorough and centred on their individual needs. This means that children and young people are very well prepared for transition from primary school into high school and allows them to settle quickly into their new school where they soon thrive.

This is enhanced by the excellent support provided by the head boy and prefects who are very positive role models to other pupils. The head boy spoke positively of the selection process, how he had to apply for the role, and provide references and his curriculum vitae. This all culminated in an interview with staff and governors. He said that this was a positive experience that helped him to prepare for life outside school.

Pupils have access to an experienced and stable team of care staff who know them very well. 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. Staff are passionate about their work. They say that they love their job and are committed to making a difference. Their enthusiasm acts as a catalyst for pupils who respond to the aspirational ethos that is set.

The premises are well set out and maintained to a very high standard. Pupils are actively encouraged to take care of and have responsibility for their residential environments. Consequently, they are homely and offer a wealth of options to play games, such as snooker, and to socialise. Houses are organised to meet the needs of young people. Pupils often share a bedroom and say that they enjoy this.

They said that they can ask to move bedrooms if they do not feel comfortable but they have not felt the need to. The opportunity to stay in the 'privilege bedrooms' is something that the boys aspire to. They know that if they work hard all things are possible. This effectively instils a sound work ethic in all of the boys.

Residential pupils enjoy an extensive range of freshly prepared, nutritious meals and snacks. Meal times are very much social occasions with lots of lively banter. Pupils ensure that visitors are well looked after and know the mealtime routines. Pupils are very keen to tell them about their school and to find out why visitors are here. Older

pupils in the independence accommodation relish the opportunities to plan, shop for, and prepare their own meals.

The support provided to families is exceptional. Parents said that the school has saved their lives and that they implicitly trust the school with their children - something that they have not been able to do before. This holistic approach means that staff work closely with families and carers to support them, including at weekends and in the evenings. This may involve weekend astronomy or fishing trips or home visits to support families. This approach is valued highly by parents. Parents said that the staff are very responsive to any concerns that they may have and quickly address the issues.

Residential pupils can call home using the house phones. Mobile phones with cameras are not allowed in school. However, the headteacher offers a phone swop scheme through which a boy can borrow a school mobile to use with his sim card. This means that he can continue to call and text during his stay. Alternatively, the boys can ask to use their own phones in the presence of a member of staff. This innovative scheme enables pupils to keep in touch with those people who are important to them and helps to keep them safe.

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

The safety and well-being of residential pupils is outstanding. This is because of the staff's excellent understanding of the safeguarding procedures. All staff are suitably trained in child protection. They are fully aware of the residential pupils' diverse needs and behaviours and of how these may affect them. Any concerns about a pupil are referred to the appropriate agencies such as children's social care, the pupil's social worker, or local area designated officer for advice on how to proceed and support. The boys said that they are safe and feel safe here.

Staff display an extensive range of child-friendly notices around the school and residential environment, to support residential pupils' knowledge and understanding of the roles of staff in helping them to stay safe. Information includes what they should do if they are worried or upset, or if they feel bullied. Effective support is in place for any pupil who is bullied. The head boy takes a lead role in supporting pupils, and he has taken a course on supporting those who have been bullied. This is carefully monitored and supported by staff and is a very useful tool in supporting the boys.

Young people report that bullying is not a big issue and that they are confident to speak with staff if they have a problem or are worried about anything. The headteacher has an open-door policy whereby young people know they can go to see him if they are unhappy or, indeed, as was the case at this inspection, to share good news about personal achievements.

Residential pupils do not go missing. Staff are very clear about the procedures to be implemented should this occur. Residential pupils' safety is enshrined in everyday practice. Staff use dynamic and progressive risk assessment of the needs and vulnerabilities of the residential pupils. Staff help them to identify individual areas for

development, and to create effective strategies that help young people to make the right choice. In this way, they learn and practise self-determination and emotional regulation that underpin the significant progress they make in keeping themselves safe.

Positive behaviour is effectively and consistently promoted. Staff are highly skilled in de-escalation techniques, which are implemented extremely well. This is supported by the staff's innate understanding of each young person, their vulnerabilities and how these impact on them. As a result, the number of physical interventions has dramatically declined. Restrictions are given when a pupil breaches a school rule. However, some records pertaining to this lack clarity as to what the pupil was asked to do as a result of the restriction.

Residential pupils are confident to self-manage their behaviour, for example by walking to a quiet space when they are stressed. The boys also gently remind others, for example by saying 'language' when they are becoming over excited or are swearing. This means that they are able to think about what they are doing and modify their behaviour without it escalating further.

Robust monitoring and vetting procedures mean that young people are kept safe. All visitors to the school are required to sign in and out and are carefully monitored around the school. Dynamic risk assessments mean that residential pupils are able to engage safely in a range of high-risk activities, for example learning how to ride a motorbike or quad bike. They also understand the need to wear the right equipment, such as helmets and arm protectors. They are actively involved in the maintenance of their equipment, such as their bikes, to ensure that they are in good condition. This is not only a fun activity, but provides a wealth of learning opportunities for the boys in a fun non-threatening environment.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding

The leadership and management is outstanding. The strong, inspirational headteacher effectively empowers other staff with his commitment and enthusiasm. His infectious enthusiasm filters through to all staff and inspires them to do their utmost to support the residential pupils. As a result, staff are passionate about their role. They work collaboratively with pupils' parents and other agencies to ensure that the highest quality of care is provided to each pupil. The residential provision is integral to the school and is fully encompassed into everything the school does. The staff are extremely committed to the ongoing development of the school.

The school is very well supported by a strong and dedicated governing body. Governors new to the role are enthusiastic and are eagerly undertaking a range of training to assist them further in their role. They said that they are here to help to make a difference and are not afraid to challenge the senior leadership on any proposals that they are considering making. This effective source of challenge helps the school to move forward continually and to look at new ways of supporting the boys.

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. An open culture, where everyone has a stake in the success of the school and all views are welcome, is

encouraged by the headteacher and other managers. Pupils are proud of their achievements and positive progress, and parents praise the school for the positive impact on their child's development.

The headteacher's door is always open, and pupils are very confident to seek him out not only if they have a problem but to share their successes with them. They said that he is there for them, and, 'We know he can work his magic to help sort things out for us'.

The diverse skills of the staff team bring with them their individual interests and talents that are effectively utilised to empower young people. For example, their love of the outdoors and water sports, cycling, keeping fit, and reading effectively inspires the boys to try new things. All care staff are trained to the required level in order to carry out their individual roles and responsibilities.

Monitoring is improving, but does not always make clear any shortfalls in record keeping or the action taken to address this. This is because, in some cases, it does not sufficiently scrutinise the documentation, for example the restrictions record. Furthermore, some records are not signed or dated. These are recording issues and do not affect the care provided, but this is a missed opportunity for the school to drive forward further improvements and to demonstrate the outstanding work that it has done.

Thorough and effective systems for daily information exchange characterise staff commitment to integrated working. Handovers between parents, carers, school and the residence help staff to consider any emerging support needs for residential pupils and to review appointments or visits that may affect the pupils' welfare or emotional stability.

Residential pupils thoroughly enjoy staying in school and are proud to be associated with it. They settle in well and reap the rewards of the extensive range of opportunities, both educational and social, that are afforded to them. Consequently, they are making exceptional progress across all areas of their development and, in particular, in their confidence and self-esteem.

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 exceed the standard of good and result in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact that 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's 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 that children and young people are not protected, or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded, or their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	119873
Social care unique reference number	SC035805
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	49
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	11–16
Headteacher	Mr Joseph Prendergast
Date of previous boarding inspection	8 December 2014
Telephone number	01524 221333
Email address	head@wenningtonhall.lancs.sch.uk

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