

Rossendale School

Moor Side Farm, Bamford Road, Ramsbottom, BURY, Lancashire, BL0 0RT

Inspection dates

07/03/2016 to 09/03/2016

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

- This is a school that has had its residential provision rated consistently as outstanding at recent inspections. It is a school that continues to prosper and grow, based on its willingness to reflect on its current practice and introduce continuous improvements and developments. Systematic monitoring to identify weakness and develop working practices further, coupled with an awareness of the ever changing needs of its pupils, allows the school to work flexibly to meet those needs.
- Residential pupils actively look forward to their time spent in residency and confirm they feel safe and secure when they stay over. This view is supported in the responses received from parents who have confidence in the school to keep their child safe.
- Residential pupils benefit from being looked after by a highly motivated residential staff team, who are dedicated, experienced and well trained. The organisation of the residential provision is excellent, allowing it to function smoothly to address the individual needs of those pupils in residence. The relationships formed between pupils and staff are outstanding.
- A particular strength of the school is in its team centred approach, with all staff being seen to have a vital job to do. Staff buy into the ethos, culture and working practices that have built up over the years, providing pupils with the highest standard of care that is both consistent and individualised to meet their specific needs.
- Feedback received from pupils and parents demonstrates the value they put on the residential provision. For example, in the targeted work with residential pupils

to promote and increase their independence skills. This leads to them creating appropriate social networks, developing strong and lasting friendships and integrating into local communities as they develop new skills. As a result, their confidence and self-esteem increases greatly.

- The one area highlighted for further improvement is made to assist the school in its quest for continued improvement.

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 dates of when each physical intervention incident takes place is recorded consistently in the schools central record of physical interventions.

Information about this inspection

Notice of the inspection was by telephone call to the school initially at 08.30 on the first day of the inspection. Details of the inspection were confirmed with the head of care and then followed up by e-mail, which also contained; a letter of confirmation, an indicative timetable, letter to parents (parent view) and a copy of Annex A.

During the inspection, the following activities were undertaken; Each of the residential units were visited. Informal discussions with pupils took place when the inspector visited residential areas after school, early evenings and early mornings, observing routines, inter-action between residential staff and pupils and sharing various meals with pupils.

In addition to this, meetings and discussion took place with; headteacher, deputy headteacher, head of care, who is also the designated safeguarding lead, the schools administrator, senior residential and residential staff, as well as the looked after children's nurse. The case tracking of selected students led to two sets of parents being spoken with. The inspector also attended a meeting of the pupil council. Information was taken from the most recent surveys of students and parents undertaken by the school themselves. Contact with the local authority designated officer was made prior to the inspection commencing.

Inspection team

Graham Robinson

Lead social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

Rossendale School is an independent residential special school, providing education for pupils who display behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, including autistic spectrum disorder. Pupils are subject to a statement of need under the 1996 Education Act (since superseded by the 2002 Education Act and the 2006 Education and Inspections Act).

The school provides education to pupils of mixed gender, between the ages of seven to 18 years old. There are currently 66 pupils on roll. A total of 13 pupils currently experience residential provision from one to four evening per week. The residential provision operates Monday to Thursday inclusive, term-time only.

The residential provision is spread between two sites approximately four miles away from the school. The accommodation consists of single bedrooms and each house offers communal areas for eating, studying and relaxing.

The residential provision was last inspected in September 2014.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

The progress and development made by residential pupils continues to be outstanding. A more flexible approach in the use of its residential provision is providing pupils with a more targeted input, regarding the development of their independence skills.

One residential pupil summed this up by saying 'I am not as much bother to my Mum as I used to be because I am looking after myself better.' This view is supported by parents with one saying about her son, 'there has been a massive change in him this year. He is growing up and things are slotting together much better.'

The residential experience targets and promotes greater independence in the quest to allow pupils to fulfil their maximum potential. One young person told the inspector, 'Coming here is helping me become more independent.' Aspirations of staff are high, which translates into the ambition pupils have for themselves. For example one spent time with the inspector explaining how they wished to work in child-care once they had completed their college course. Another spoke in some depth about their plans for full-time education at a community based college, following their successful experience of the recent taster days held by the college.

Developing greater independence is a feature of life in the residential provision which pupils recognise is beneficial with regard to improving their confidence and self-esteem. For example, a pupil spoke in some depth about areas she felt more confident in and how this is benefitting her saying, 'I can speak with most people now without being over-nervous.'

Pupils thrive in a social environment that has structure and adherence to appropriate boundaries, which gives them a sense of responsibility and duty towards others in a group living situation. They enjoy spending time and socialising with other pupils who they often form strong friendships with. In addition they cement strong relationships with staff. Pupils recognise this with one saying, 'I have really enjoyed getting involved with residency. One benefit is I get to spend more time with my key worker.' Another says, 'The staff are great and I still love being in residence.'

The school uses residency to guide pupils towards developing new interests and hobbies, as well as supporting any existing ones they may have. Full use is made of both local community facilities and where appropriate, facilities in a pupils home area. Activities are chosen with care to promote a pupils interest, meet their individual needs and provide new experiences that can be replicated in a pupils own community.

For example, following the continuous success of the girls group, a boys group has been created which meets every Tuesday evening. Those pupils involved have along with staff, devised a programme of activities to stimulate them educationally, promote their fitness and increase their opportunity for greater social engagement. Another two pupils speak enthusiastically about their weekly activity at a community based drama group. One confidently describing how he gets up to speak and sing in front of others, which

for him is a significant development based on his starting point at the school.

Residential pupils appreciate living in an inclusive environment where disability is not viewed as a barrier to leading a challenging and fulfilling lifestyle. For example, one pupil who knew the inspector, having met at previous inspections, is so proud she was able to have a full conversation with him, without her nervous tick showing. Another pupil who had also met the inspector previously, spoke in depth about the areas he now feels more confident in and is very proud at the increased levels of control he is developing, regarding his own behaviour.

Residential pupils along with day pupils have a strong voice within the school due to the excellent levels of communication and consultation that exists. Pupils confirm they have a voice and can influence certain areas of the school's operation which includes residency. For example, the inspector witnessed a meeting of the pupil council, which included a high proportion of pupils with experience of the residential provision.

The council is made up of pupils with mixed abilities and is a fine example of how disability does not exclude pupils in taking an active role in the school's own development. For example, all pupils in the council contributed fully to the meeting and also championed the views of other pupils they represented. A number of agreements were reached with staff, based on ideas submitted by the pupils themselves.

Promoting and meeting the health needs of pupils is outstanding. Excellent links with parents and local medical services ensures every-day health needs are being fully met. Detailed planning documents include areas of risk and strategies to cover any specific health needs a pupil may have. The arrangements for storage, administering and recording medication, along with professional oversight of the whole process, has been strengthened since the previous inspection.

The school also employs a number of staff who are qualified and trained to provide a whole range of therapeutic input to its pupils. This is another area that has developed further since the previous inspection. As a result, following an appropriate referral process, pupils can access a whole range of therapeutic input that meets their individual need, without lengthy delay. A further benefit is the input can be delivered within the campus of the school.

A high proportion of activities in place for residential pupils involve exercise which promotes fitness. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily and all dietary needs are catered for. This includes religious as well as medical. Steps are taken to ensure the religious and cultural needs of pupils are met. For example, the school has recently bought in at its own expense, the services of a local Rabbi following the inclusion into the school of pupils from the Jewish faith. This is an excellent example of how the school is prepared to act quickly to ensure the diverse needs of its pupils are understood and met.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

The quality of care and support given to residential pupils has been continuously judged as outstanding following recent inspections. The school is complimented on being able to maintain this standard. One reason is due to the ability of senior and other staff to review, reflect and evaluate current practice and then adapt it successfully to the ever-changing needs of its pupils.

The residential provision is an area that has seen considerable change. For example, along with some pupils being resident four nights per week, a number are only resident for one or two evenings. There is also the provision for pupils to stay back for evening activities before being taken home. This could create logistical difficulties but does not, due to the excellent organisation of the provision and the willingness and commitment of staff to work flexibly.

Supplementing the more flexible use of residency is the schools recent development and expansion of its own transportation. This has created a pool of vehicles, along with drivers and escort staff who are employed directly by the school. This gives the school greater control and flexibility of use, regarding the timing of transportation of pupils to and from school.

Residential pupils speak well of staff and enjoy their experiences of being resident. Indeed, a common theme is they wish they could stay more often. Throughout the inspection the residential units were well ordered and punctuated with a buzz of positive energy. Pupils are relaxed and ease in their environment and the relationships between themselves, and with staff were observed as outstanding. A pupil spoke for many by saying 'I get on really well with the staff who look after me.'

Feedback from other sources support this view. A parent described to the inspector the journey her son was on and how being in residency was improving his confidence, self-esteem and independence skills. She finished off by saying, 'he really loves it, it's a very nurturing environment.' A professional from an external agency who visits the school regularly describes is as being full of energy, yet at the same time, has a calmness about it.

The school has excellent tried and tested systems for introducing pupils into the residential provision. For example, the inspector spoke in some depth with a pupil who acts as a mentor to other pupils. Also, pupils are introduced slowly into residency only staying overnight when they and their parents are comfortable with the arrangements. An excellent example of this was observed during the inspection.

Residential pupils benefit from experiencing an environment where individual needs, disabilities and identities are fully accepted. As they develop their interests and confidence grows, they become more involved with community life. Appreciating and celebrating different cultures is built into the daily life of the provision. For example, with themed nights and trips to other community based activities. As a result, pupils develop a greater appreciation of what is around them, giving them insight into areas they may not have experienced before.

The four self-contained residential units are all located in the local community away from the main school site. Pupils plan meals with staff and then shop locally for the ingredients. Many pupils either cook for themselves or assist with the cooking, which

links to their programme of independence.

The state of repair, décor, fixtures, fittings and equipment is all to the highest standard. For those pupils in residency for the week, bedrooms are personalised to reflect their taste and interests. For those in for shorter periods, bedrooms can be personalised on a daily basis. Pupils say they are comfortable and were observed as being relaxed and ease in their environment.

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

The arrangements to protect and keep pupils safe are outstanding. Residential staff receive training in safeguarding, which is updated regularly. They can demonstrate an understanding of their role and responsibility to keep pupils safe. This is underpinned by other training such as Prevent training, which staff have recently completed. Senior staff who are experienced and well respected in the field of safeguarding, sit on local advisory panels, which helps to keep them informed and in touch with any developments that occur locally.

The school maintains excellent links to other external agencies charged with keeping young people safe. Working relationships and levels of communication are strong. Since the previous inspection, no safeguarding incidents have occurred in residency, although the pro-active response from the school to concerns and suspicions elsewhere, has led to co-operative working with other agencies.

Residential pupils confirm they feel safe. A pupil told the inspector, 'I always feel safe when I am here.' Another stated, 'I feel safer here than when I am home.' Parents spoken with also provide positive feedback on this matter with one saying, 'They look after her really well.' I am confident she is safe.'

Behaviour management in the residential units is well managed and there have been no significant behavioural incidents since the previous inspection. This includes incidents of physical intervention, going missing and complaints. This is due in part to the fact that pupils want to go into residency and are not forced. It also reflects the schools overall push to minimise behavioural incidents. For example, the overall trend in the number of physical restraints since the previous inspection for the whole school, is down.

Each residential unit has its own set of records which are monitored and evaluated by senior staff regularly. These feed into the schools central records. Records are kept up to date, are thorough, detailed and evaluative. However, the schools central record of physical intervention fails to consistently record the date when incidents occur. This is highlighted as an area for potential improvement.

One of the significant developments undertaken by the school since the previous inspection is with the introduction of an electronic recording system known as; Behaviour Watch. This is a tool used for general monitoring of incidents, internal communications and evidencing progress. This is another outstanding example of investment by the school in its quest for continued improvement and progression.

Residential pupils safety is underpinned by a range of plans and strategies in place to

keep them safe. Pupils are confident that any matters of concern they may have will be dealt with appropriately. No pupil or parent made any complaint during the inspection process. Incidents in the residential provision of bullying, missing from home, use of sanctions and restraint either do not occur or they are extremely rare. E-safety is well managed.

Bullying is not an area of concern to residential pupils, who confirm staff are quick to intervene if pupils fall out with each other. No issues or concerns were raised with the inspector on this matter.

Recruitment and clearance procedures meet with statutory requirement and guidance. All levels of staff are suitably cleared and trained. For example, the schools own taxi drivers receive safeguarding and physical intervention training as part of the core staff training programme. The school is also implementing its policy of re-checking longer serving staff every three years, which is deemed to be good practice.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and head of care work collaboratively to ensure standards are maintained. They demand the highest standards from their staff who are monitored, supervised and appraised regularly. Any shortfall is quickly identified and rectified with appropriate action plans put into place. Constant evaluation, coupled with the willingness and ability to make changes where necessary, allows for continual progress and development to be made.

The residential staff team is experienced and well trained. There is a stability in the team, reflected in the fact that no staff have left since the previous inspection, but new additions to the team have been made. Staff fully support and respect the senior staff team, buying into the ethos, culture and working practices that have built up over the years. They adopt a genuine team centred approach which provides pupils with a real consistency of care. The whole organisation and functioning of the residential provision is child focussed and aimed at meeting the ever changing needs of pupils.

The school invests heavily in training for staff. The core staff training programme is active with a clear expectation placed on staff to keep their core training modules up to date. Recent training in child sexual awareness and the Prevent strategy have widened the skill and knowledge base of staff. This helps them to reflect on their own practice and make further improvements.

The internal monitoring undertaken by senior staff is methodical and evaluative. Information feeds into development plans which in turn, promote change. For example, since the previous inspection some areas of progress and new developments include; more flexible use of the residential provision, a new 'traffic light' system introduced into administrative procedures where areas of shortfall are flagged up and highlighted quicker, improving and expanding written records which assess the impact the residential provision is having on pupils and targeting potential work experience placements to match the individual needs of pupils.

Following previous inspections, the school has an excellent record of compliance. However, no recommendations or areas for improvement were identified at that inspection.

The time between this and the previous inspection has been used positively by the school to evaluate its practice and make improvements. Pupils are settled, actively enjoying their experiences of residency. Their feelings and opinions are accurately summed up in a letter from a pupil to his placing authority where he writes, 'I would recommend this school and college to anyone on the Autistic spectrum. I think they will feel much safer and enjoy school more and their parents will relax knowing their child is happier and feeling welcome'.

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	119845
Social care unique reference number	SC009656
DfE registration number	888/6020

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	Mixed
Age range of boarders	seven to18
Headteacher	Mr D Duncan
Date of previous boarding inspection	30 September 2014
Telephone number	01706 822779
Email address	rossendale@priorygroup.com

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