

Rowdeford School

Rowdeford School, Rowde, DEVIZES, Wiltshire, SN10 2QQ

Inspection dates

30 November 2015 to 02 December 2015

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 young people excel in their educational, social and personal development as a result of the excellent support and purposeful care they receive from residential boarding staff. The residential provision is an area of excellence within the school and the educational progress residential young people make exceeds that made by day pupils.
- Residential young people thrive. Their self-confidence and esteem flourishes because of the excellent range of activities they attend. Some young people particularly enjoyed visiting Downing Street, joining in with the Shakespeare festival and taking part in a musical theatre experience in London. Young people enjoy living at the school.
- Care planning is of an exceptional quality, worthy of dissemination to other residential special schools. The merit of these arrangements results from the expertise of the head of care and staff team, who implements practice based social care research to underpin their work.
- The excellent behaviour displayed by young people in the residential provision is a result of the staff team's positive approach to supporting them. Support strategies used in the residential provision are now used by the education teams and are supporting young people to develop positive behaviour during the school day.
- Staff at all levels demonstrate excellent safeguarding practice. The team's work with partner agencies is particularly effective and contributes to ensuring young people are protected.
- The school should consider improving fire safety by linking the three stand-alone fire alarm systems to one system for the whole campus.

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?

- The school should consider improving fire safety by linking the three stand-alone fire alarm systems.

Information about this inspection

The school was given two hours' notice of this inspection. Meetings took place with staff, young people and some parents. The inspector reviewed the school's policies, procedures, records and associated documents. All of the residential accommodation was inspected. Meals were taken with the young people both during school hours and during boarding time. The inspector observed the interactions between the young people and between young people and staff during the evenings. The inspector spoke to the young people's independent visitor and a school volunteer. Prior to the inspection, staff and young people completed inspection questionnaires. Views expressed in these questionnaires were taken into account during the inspection and are reflected in this report. The school's self-evaluation and consultation with parents and carers were also inspected.

Inspection team

Wendy Anderson

Lead social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

Rowdeford School is a local authority, co-educational, special school for pupils aged between 11 and 16 years with complex learning disabilities. The school provides places for a maximum of 130 pupils. All pupils admitted to the school have a statement of special educational needs.

The school provides weekly residential boarding provision for up to 16 boys and girls during the school term. The residential provision is provided within the main school building and comprises two separate accommodation units one boys and one and girls. Referrals for admission to the boarding provision may come from external agencies, the school, parents, carers, or pupils. During this inspection, there were 106 day pupils and 16 residential pupils. The residential provision was previously inspected in May 2014.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

Young people who reside at the school make exceptional progress in all aspects of their lives. Care staff create meaningful structures and a sense of purpose for each young person. They provide an excellent quality of care and support young people's educational attainment exceptionally well. Care staff work alongside education staff to ensure that their care and learning approaches are individualised and applied equally at home and at school. As a result, residential young people achieve better results at school than day pupils.

Young people enjoy and benefit from their residential experiences. They speak enthusiastically about their stay and how they have made good friends. They say that being resident has helped them to be more tolerant and understanding of others. Young people value the relationships they have with care staff. Young people are very positive about the staff who care for them. For example, they said, 'The care staff are great fun', 'They look after me really well', 'They are always there for me', 'Nothing is too much trouble' and 'Staff are just great'.

The staff team continuously improves its care practice to benefit residential young people and the progress they make. The team uses up-to-date research and developments in child care to inform their work. The school's participation in new child care research projects supports leaders' aspirations to be at the cutting edge of positive new developments. The school is regarded by fellow professionals as a leader in its field. The staff share their expertise and provide support and training to other residential special schools so that learning is widely disseminated.

Strategies to protect young people's safety, health and well-being are threaded throughout the team's work. The team helps young people to develop strategies to keep themselves safe including internet safety and Prevent, the government's strategy to protect young people from radicalisation and extremism.

Young people thrive as staff nurture them and meet their individual needs exceptionally well. Young people respond well to the warm, fun and caring relationships they have with staff. The support young people receive helps them to develop positive self-esteem and self-worth.

The care staff ensure young people can, irrespective of their individual abilities, join in with a wide range of activities in the same way as other young people of similar age. These opportunities progressively enhance the young people's self-confidence alongside developing their social, emotional and independence skills. As a result, young people enjoy their experiences in the school and are well prepared for adulthood.

Parents and fellow professionals praised the staff team on their partnership and collaborative ways of working, including sharing information. Parents said that they felt included in all aspects of their child's life. Parents also praised the team for the support

they have given them.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

The quality of care and support that staff give to young people is exceptional. The comprehensive assessment process supports each young person's admission, ensuring they make a successful transition to the residential provision. The length of time this takes is individualised to meet each young person's needs.

Staff have very high aspirations for young people. The care staff's excellent understanding of young people's individual needs results in them making exceptional progress from their starting points on admission in all aspects of their lives. The educational achievements of residential pupils are particularly evident in their increased vocabulary and reading skills, and excellent attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4 in English. Parents commented that they were very impressed with the progress their children had made. Closely linked to this, is the work care and education staff carry out to increase young people's confidence and belief in their own abilities.

Strong collaborative working between the care staff, professionals and families is well established. As a result, staff engage well with families. Parents commented that they have been impressed by this approach as they felt this was the first time they had been provided with effective ongoing support.

Every young person has a comprehensive, up-to-date and accurate education, health and care plan (EHCP). These excellent quality ECHPs ensure staff's knowledge and support of young people is highly individualised and effective. Young people are fully involved in the development of these plans. Consequently, they gain an understanding of their own needs, can express what assistance they need from others and start to develop their own support strategies. Staff provide young people with access to a range of additional support services on-site and external to the school. As a result, a holistic approach to meeting their needs is ensured.

Staff value the views of young people. Consultation with young people is one of the strengths of the school and is strongly embedded into the culture and ethos. Care staff effectively listen to young people, regularly seek their feedback through surveys, house meetings and key working sessions. Staff take responsive action to the issues raised by young people. Consequently, young people say that they are treated with dignity and respect.

Education and care staff work together successfully to provide young people with a consistently outstanding approach to their education and care needs. This is especially effective in managing young people's behaviour. Shared strategies and approaches developed across home and school result in young people clearly understanding expectations and responding well in both settings. Parents, education and care staff's shared understanding of targets supports young people's development. This collaborative approach helps young people to make good progress at school.

Young people take part enthusiastically in a wide range of activities in the school and in their local and wider community. Young people develop their interests and hobbies as well as trying new out new experiences. Some young people really enjoyed taking part in the Shakespeare festival and a musical theatre event in London. Young people said that the activities made 'boarding great fun'. Young people's active involvement in their local community promotes positive relationships with the school's neighbours. In addition, young people's support of local and national charities engenders a developing sense of care for others and an understanding of wider social issues. During the inspection, young people attended a Christingle service in the local church. They are involved in charity work for local and for large charities. Young people say they enjoy these opportunities as they liked helping others.

The school has outstanding medical arrangements which makes sure all young people's health care needs are fully met. Administration of medication is very well managed. Staff practice in this area is frequently monitored to ensure high standards are maintained. Comprehensive records are maintained and regularly audited by managers to ensure that good practice continues. Staff are skilled at supporting young people's very complex health care needs. Staff work closely with specialist nurses to develop and implement medical protocols and health plans. Health professionals have praised the care staff team for their work in this area.

The quality of the residential accommodation is of a high standard. It is well furnished and has a warm, welcoming atmosphere. Young people are very proud of their residential houses and were keen to show the inspector around. They said that they loved the houses, especially their bedrooms. There is ample social space in each of the houses and good use is made by young people of a wide range of art and craft materials, books and games.

Young people have an excellent understanding of living a healthy life and the importance of a balanced diet. They learn about where food comes from and help to care for chickens and a pig. There is a large walled garden where young people enjoy growing their own vegetables and fruit; the produce is then used in the school kitchens. Consequently, young people's individual dietary needs are well catered for and young people said they 'loved the food'.

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

Young people said that they feel extremely safe at the school and that staff look after them really well. The staff team has an excellent working knowledge of all aspects of safeguarding, and child protection arrangements are exceptionally well managed. The school governor's close monitoring of the staff team's safeguarding work ensures that matters of concern are dealt with effectively.

Staff safeguarding practice remains current by the provision of an extensive, effective and regular training programme. Managers responsible for child protection have built strong working relationships with local safeguarding agencies. As a result, child protection concerns are effectively dealt with and result in young people being kept safe.

The school has comprehensive child protection policies and effective practices in place; these are regarded by external agencies as examples of excellence. On several occasions, the school has been asked to help other schools and share their diligent safeguarding practices.

The staff team has an excellent understanding of the additional vulnerabilities of the young people in its care. Their robust working practices ensure young people's safety is paramount. They have also been very successful in developing the young people's own understanding of risk and their vulnerability. This work helps young people understand the need to use the internet safely. Young people told the inspector about what they had learned in this area and what actions they take to protect themselves. For example, they have a good awareness of 'stranger danger' when using social media.

The school's comprehensive Missing from Care procedure is in line with the local authority protocol. Since the previous inspection, there have been no incidents of young people going missing from the school. The staff's diligent awareness of the vulnerabilities of the young people they care for protects them well and reduces the potential risk of them being exploited by others. All staff have received training in this area and demonstrated an excellent knowledge of this.

The staff team promotes an environment of tolerance and acceptance. Young people and staff effectively share the school's core principles about respecting and caring for others. A young person said, 'We need to look after each other and not hurt one another'. Behaviour is very well managed in the residential provision. Young people develop empathy for others by the highly effective positive reinforcement and insightful discussions about how to treat others that they have with staff. During the inspection, a young person, who was nervous about speaking, was supported to express their views by another young person who had met inspectors before. Young people learn to understand how their behaviours impact on themselves and others, and they develop self-management strategies. Young people respond well to the school's value based curriculum and feel the rules are fair.

Young people understand how to tell others if they feel unhappy or worried. Young people are confident at speaking with care staff and know how to make a complaint and contact the independent person. Bullying and discriminatory behaviours are not accepted and are swiftly dealt with. Young people said that bullying was not a problem at the residential provision or school and felt they would always tell staff who would quickly look into this.

Risk is assessed accurately and well managed. Each young person has an individual, detailed and well-written risk assessment. These are kept under review to reflect the young person's current situation. Comprehensive risk assessments are also in place for all the activities in which they are involved as well as the environment in which they live. Health and safety is taken very seriously but does not prevent young people from having fun. The school has had a public footpath moved to reduce the public's access to the school grounds. Fire safety systems are subject to all the required checks. However, there are several parts of the school which have stand-alone fire alarm systems. This does not place anyone within the school at risk as all parts of the school are appropriately protected. Fire safety would be further enhanced if all the fire alarm systems were linked.

The recruitment procedure is conducted with rigour; staff have all the required checks in line with safer recruitment practices.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding

Residential provision at the school is exceptionally well managed and led by a very experienced team. Leaders and managers are aspirational and continuously strive to improve the quality of care and experiences for young people. Staff at all levels have high expectations of themselves and the young people for whom they care. The staff team inspires young people to reach their full potential. This is reflected not only in the young peoples' increased attainment in their education but also in reaching their individual goals and their development as caring members of their local community.

The whole school ethos of valuing and caring for each other threads throughout the residential provision. This positive culture is shared by all staff and young people and is effectively demonstrated in practice. During the inspection, young people showed empathy for other children and respect for the staff team. These values were reciprocal and result in excellent behaviour and relationships.

Leaders and managers keep themselves and the staff team up-to-date with current best practice in social and child care models. They effectively use learning from their involvement in research based initiatives to enhance their work in the school. There is rigorous scrutiny and oversight by leaders, managers and governors. Their efficient use of monitoring systems and of self-assessment tools supports their analysis and evaluation of the school's performance. As a result, they have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The school has an excellent track record of continually improving the provision. The development plan for the coming year is focused on improving the quality of service for young people and their families.

Leaders and managers lead by example. The quality of their work has been recognised by external agencies. Consequently, the school has supported other schools and agencies to improve. Recent examples of this include supporting others to advance their safeguarding practices and develop the quality of care planning and young people's records.

Comprehensive training programmes, very effective formal supervision and team meetings all help to make sure that staff are skilled to care for young people. Staff at all levels are knowledgeable and have a clear understanding of changes to legislation and developments in child care practice. Staff and managers use this learning to review and update internal policies and procedures. As a result, policies and procedures are comprehensive and useful documents, implemented effectively in practice.

Staff across the school and residential provision are extremely supportive of each other and are committed to continuous improvement of their practice and young people's development. Staff act as critical friends and are able to professionally challenge each other and reflect on the quality of their work. Good use is made of the internal monitoring systems to examine and evaluate the work they do and the impact this has

on young people's progress. One staff member said, 'There are always things we could do better and this is what drives us forward'. All improvements provide young people with more opportunities and an increased standard of care.

Excellent relationships exist between the school and residential staff, families and external professionals. The staff team is regarded as a committed, child-centred group of professionals who are focused on ensuring that young people in their care are able to reach their full potential. Staff are also committed to sharing their work with parents and other child care professionals. During this inspection, a number of professionals and parents spoke very highly to the inspector of the staff team and their work with young people.

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	1022386
Social care unique reference number	SC039099
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	132 pupil 16 of whom board
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	11 to16
Headteacher	Mrs Ingrid Sidmouth
Date of previous boarding inspection	13/05/2014
Telephone number	01380 850309
Email address	head@rowdeford.wilts.sch.uk

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