

Wishmore Cross Academy

Wishmore Cross Academy, Alpha Road, Chobham, Surrey, GU24 8NE

Inspection dates

18 November 2015 to 20 November 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

- Innovative ways of working have ensured the needs of vulnerable young people are well understood and they are given the right level of support to address their difficulties.
- Practice is informed and developed taking into account current research. This has resulted in the implementation of effective behaviour management programmes and a reduction in the use of physical restraint.
- Robust safeguarding policies are fully implemented, keeping young people safe. Excellent monitoring of child protection concerns is maintained, and effective challenge is made when external agencies are perceived not to have met their responsibilities.
- Effective partnership working ensures young people have the opportunity to access community resources and expand their support network.
- Well trained, supported and motivated staff provide consistently high levels of care. They develop strong, trusting relationships with young people.
- Leaders and managers promote a culture of continuous improvement. They ensure change is well managed and that staff remain motivated to meet the needs of young people.
- Young people make good progress in many aspects of their lives. They display less challenging behaviour and experience increased emotional resilience.

- Parents and carers are supported and encouraged to participate in the induction process for new residential pupils. They are kept well informed and consistently provide positive feedback on the residential provision.

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 that all available information is taken into account to assess individual risks to young people and ensure the effectiveness of care plans.
- Ensure that all behaviour management processes, particularly restorative justice meetings, are recorded.
- Ensure that assessments are undertaken in respect of the allocation of shared bedrooms, and that these are recorded.

Information about this inspection

Ofsted carried out this inspection with four hours' notice. Inspection activities included; formal and informal discussions with residential pupils, sharing meals with pupils and observing a young people's consultation meeting. Discussions took place with the head teacher, head of care, the lead therapist, other members of the senior management team and members of care staff. One governor was interviewed over the telephone, and a telephone discussion also took place with the independent visitor. A wide range of documentation concerning the residential provision was scrutinised. There was an insufficient number of responses on 'Parent View' for any analysis, but face to face meetings and telephone discussions took place with four parents.

Inspection team

Stephen Collett

Lead social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

Wishmore Cross Academy is a publicly funded independent state academy and is part of the Academies Enterprise Trust. The academy is situated in Chobham, Surrey and draws pupils from a range of backgrounds, both urban and rural, across Surrey and neighbouring Local Education Authorities. The academy is a special school for young people all of whom have a statement identifying social, emotional and mental health needs. The academy can admit up to 60 boys between the ages of 11 to 16 and can offer up to 22 residential places for four nights per week. Within the building there are three separate residential units where boarders have single or double bedrooms. The residential pupils have access to the academy grounds and facilities for evening activities

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

Young people enjoy a positive overall experience of the residential facility. One young person, who had just become a residential pupil said 'I love it, and I want to stay extra nights'. This can be attributed to the residential provision being well managed and efficiently organised. Recent changes introduced by a new Head of Care and Extended Services has ensured the facility focuses on the needs of young people and functions exclusively for their benefit.

Residential pupils make significant progress across many aspects of their lives. Parents and carers reported that young people become less isolated and begin to develop positive peer relationships, often for the first time. This helps them develop their social skills and reduce the frequency of confrontational behaviour. Young people also begin to learn age appropriate independence skills, such as maintaining good personal hygiene, which in turn benefits their self-esteem.

Becoming a residential pupil often leads to better engagement with learning and the whole school community. Average attendance figures for residential pupils are approximately 7% higher than those of day pupils. Some young people have achieved better academic results in maths and English than anticipated, since becoming residential pupils.

Staff are well supported and motivated to provide a high standard of care. This enables young people to form trusting relationships with adults who are good role models. Young people feel confident to discuss their concerns with staff and consistently said they feel safe in the residential houses. Although young people who are new to the residential facility will often challenge boundaries, they become less likely to do so as they develop positive relationships with staff. One young person stated 'the best thing about this school is the relationships you have with staff'.

A culture of continuous improvement is promoted by leaders and managers. This ensures effective monitoring systems quickly identify any shortfalls in the quality of care. The recently appointed Head of Care and Extended Services has embraced this culture and taken a pro-active approach to developing best practice. New ways of working, taking into account current research, are encouraged and supported by senior management. This has resulted in the implementation of revised behaviour management processes and outreach work with vulnerable young people.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

Staff have an excellent understanding of the individual needs of young people. Their knowledge of young people's needs is enhanced by a new approach to supporting young people which involves building links with families and undertaking home visits. Staff take exceptional measures to ensure young people feel valued and included. For example they often transport young people to and from their homes during the induction period until they become confident enough to stay overnight.

This comprehensive understanding of young people's circumstances and associated needs has resulted in productive key-work sessions. These sessions have increased from fifteen minutes to one hour in recognition of this improvement and provide young people with the opportunity to discuss any difficulties they may be having at home or school.

There is a strong commitment to hearing and taking account of the views of young people. They are involved in staff recruitment processes and have recently been consulted on the use of physical restraint. This ensures they feel valued and part of the whole school community. Young people's meetings take place each day, providing them with the opportunity to recognise and celebrate their achievements and make recommendations for improvements within the school.

Good communication between teaching and care staff ensures young people receive consistently good levels of care. Staff across the school work collaboratively, and young people benefit from teaching staff working within the residential facility to deliver a range of after school activities. These include visits to outside leisure facilities and organised events within the school. They provide young people with the opportunity to take exercise and learn new skills.

Young people are encouraged to live a healthy lifestyle and learn about the benefits of a well-balanced diet. Consequently, many young people have reduced their intake of sugary drinks. They are provided with well-prepared, nutritional meals and can prepare their own snacks within the residential houses. Arrangements for the recording and administration of medication are effective, although a more robust system is being introduced following the Head of Care undertaking an evaluation.

Management and staff are dedicated to helping young people improve their mental health and emotional well-being. They communicate effectively with the child and adolescent mental health service, advocating on behalf of young people. An in-house therapeutic counselling service has been introduced. Counselling staff are able to advise care staff on how they can work effectively to help young people develop better self-esteem and confidence. Many young people feel the school helps them to manage their emotions more effectively. One reported that he can 'now manage my behaviour and not kick off, and I can control my temper'.

An evaluation of the plans for young people has been undertaken by the Head of Care. This has identified areas where improvements could be made, particularly in relation to setting goals, targets and recording progress. These changes are now being implemented. However, young people's plans do not always take into account all the available information. This is compounded by restorative justice sessions not being recorded, this means information gained from these sessions is not being used to further inform and develop the plans.

Care staff maintain regular contact with parents and carers, and keep them updated on young people's progress. Parents and carers are encouraged to play an active role in young people's induction to the residential facility, and are made to feel welcome whenever they visit. One parent stated 'there is nothing I would change about the residential house. I am so happy he is there'. Staff are sensitive to the potential for young people to miss home, and adopt a flexible approach to which nights a young person will stay, thereby minimising the risk of this becoming problematic. All young people spoken to reported they can easily contact their families, and are encouraged to do so.

The residential houses have recently been refurbished, and provide a good standard of accommodation. They are comfortably furnished, and provide adequate space for young people to socialise, relax and pursue their hobbies and interests. Further improvements are still being implemented, such as the introduction of lockable cabinets, so that young people have more choice over how they keep their personal possessions safe.

Robust policies and procedures for ensuring the safety and well-being of young people are understood by care staff, and implemented in practice. These are regularly reviewed and amended to take account of developments in legislation and good practice. Young people are therefore protected from new and emerging risks, such as the dangers associated with radicalisation.

Four senior staff members share the role of designated lead person for child protection (DLPCP). All have received appropriate training, and have a good understanding of the responsibilities involved. The particular vulnerabilities of young people identified as being at risk of harm are documented, and staff work in accordance with local authority child protection plans. A Social Worker stated that 'child protection plans are well understood, and staff always attend child protection meetings and contribute to the plan'.

This commitment to protecting young people from harm contributes towards residential pupils feeling safe and secure. All young people spoken to during the inspection could name a member of staff they would speak to if they had concerns, and all said bullying is not an issue within the residential facility. Young people know how to make a complaint, but none have been made since the last inspection.

All safeguarding concerns are recorded in detail and demonstrate what action has been taken as a result. There is an excellent system in place for monitoring low level concerns. This ensures that over time, a detailed picture of any risk to a young person's well-being emerges. Child protection matters are promptly reported to the appropriate authorities, and a DLPCP monitors outcomes. Senior staff appropriately and robustly challenge partner agencies if they have concerns about their response to safeguarding matters.

The recently appointed Head of Care and Extended Services has undertaken a review of residential pupils care files. This process identified improvements to young people's individual risk assessments and care plans. Currently these do not always take into account all the available information relating to a young person's vulnerabilities. Similarly, although management and staff consider appropriate allocation of shared bedrooms for pupils, there is no formal risk assessment to demonstrate the safety of these arrangements.

Staff exhibit a thorough understanding of individual pupil's needs and vulnerabilities. They have excellent knowledge of the risks associated with the internet and social media. Internet use within the residential facility is closely monitored by staff. In addition there is a strong emphasis on educating young people about the risks, and this ensures they will be more able to protect themselves when away from the school.

No young people have gone missing from the residential facility since the last inspection. The policy for responding to young people who go missing is in alignment with locally agreed police protocols. Staff are familiar with the procedures they must follow if a young person goes missing and are alert to the potential for this to happen.

The approach to behaviour management on the residential facility mirrors that practised within the school. This ensures young people receive a consistent message about boundaries and acceptable behaviour. Young people are encouraged to behave well through incentives, praise and recognition for their achievements. A restorative justice model of responding to challenging behaviour is embedded across the school.

A senior manager has undertaken academic, research based study, on the emotional impact of physical restraint. This has resulted in a restraint reduction programme being introduced across

the school, and there has been a dramatic decrease in the number of incidents resulting in restraints. No young people have been restrained within the residential houses since the last inspection.

Relevant staff have been trained in safe recruitment procedures. The full implementation of these procedures minimises the chance of unsuitable adults being employed in the school. Staff development has a strong focus on safeguarding. Regular supervision gives staff the opportunity to reflect on worries they may have for a young person's welfare, and they undertake mandatory child protection training. All staff spoken to during the inspection were aware of the whistle blowing policy and expressed confidence in the senior manager's abilities to address any concerns.

Allegations made against staff are promptly reported to the local authority designated officer, and are thoroughly investigated. Young people are supported and kept appropriately informed during the process. Effective communication takes place with external professionals to ensure young people are kept safe. A Social Worker for a young person on a child protection plan said that all significant incidents are reported and staff report any follow up action they have taken.

Regular health and safety checks are undertaken in the residential houses. The premises manager oversees any remedial action necessary to ensure young people live in a safe environment. A minor shortfall in establishing timescales for the completion of tasks was rectified during the inspection.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding

The Head of Care and Extended Services was appointed in September 2015. He is suitably experienced for the role and is currently studying for the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Residential Childcare. Since commencing in post he has undertaken a review of the care being delivered and services provided to young people. A number of innovative new approaches have subsequently been implemented. These include partnership working with the youth service and outreach work with young people and their families at home. This has resulted in a much better understanding of the residential pupil's circumstances and associated needs.

This period of change has been well managed. Staff are fully engaged and supportive of the process despite there being some changes to their working terms and conditions. They recognise that the changes have benefitted the residential pupils, enabling them to deliver more personalised care. They work collaboratively as a team and with their teaching staff colleagues who supervise and support young people on after school activities. Staff feel well supported by leaders and managers and describe them as 'bold' and 'visionary'. They benefit from receiving regular supervision which gives them the opportunity to reflect on their practice and identify learning needs. The Head of Care receives high quality supervision from an external consultant, which is supportive and challenging, and sets high aspirations for continuous improvement.

Staff have access to a good range of training opportunities focused on meeting the needs of young people and keeping them safe. This is delivered internally by suitably qualified staff or by external professional organisations. Recently, the school has introduced a therapeutic counselling service for young people. As part of the process, the lead therapist has delivered training to residential and teaching staff. This has ensured all those working with young people understand the therapeutic model being adopted.

The Head of Care works pro-actively with parents, encouraging them to take a full role in

introducing and preparing young people for admission to the residential facility. This includes inviting all parents to assist young people in personalising their rooms. Parents say they are kept well informed of young people's progress or any issues of concern and are confident that they are well looked after.

Similarly, effective communication is maintained with external agencies. Social workers and other professionals are provided with appropriate information in a timely manner, particularly where young people are known to be vulnerable or at risk of harm. Strong links have been established with the youth service to ensure young people can access a range of support services. Feedback from a manager in the youth service praises the Head of Care's commitment to meeting the needs of young people.

Robust monitoring systems effectively assess and evaluate the quality of care being provided. Consequently, any weaknesses are quickly identified and acted upon. The development plan for the residential provision reflects the new Head of Care's vision for the service, highlighting the importance of creating a nurturing and therapeutic environment.

Regular visits have been undertaken by an independent visitor. Recently, a new visitor has been appointed and has benefitted from a thorough induction into the role by her predecessor. Young people are encouraged to engage with her and express their views on the care they receive. Independent visitor reports are detailed and evaluative, making clear recommendations for improvements where needed. Progress against these recommendations are monitored in supervision meetings.

Governors take a pro-active role within the school, such as contributing towards the recruitment of key members of staff. The governor with responsibility for overseeing the residential facility undertakes regular visits and engages with the young people. He examines relevant documents, such as the significant incidents log, providing an additional layer of scrutiny and appropriate challenge to the senior leadership team.

A culture of reflection and learning from practice is embedded within the leadership team. Serious incidents, such as racially motivated aggression from young people, are monitored and challenged, but are also seen as learning opportunities. This approach ensures young people experience the school as a community where all are entitled to feel valued and respected.

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	138766
Social care unique reference number	SC013899
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	12
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	11 to16
Headteacher	Jed Donnelly
Date of previous boarding inspection	12/11/2014
Telephone number	01276 857555
Email address	

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