

# Archers Brook SEMH Residential School

Chester Road, Great Sutton, ELLESMERE PORT ,CH66  
2NA

<b>Inspection dates</b>	19-21 October 2015
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<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
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Quality of care and support	Outstanding
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How well children and young people are protected	Outstanding
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Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
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## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is outstanding because

- Young people are safe and said they feel safe here. They enjoy extremely positive and trusting relationships with staff and their friends. Parents said their children thoroughly enjoy their time on residence. Staff have a very good understanding of the schools child protection and safeguarding procedures. They work extensively and cooperatively with other professionals to ensure young people are protected.
- Leadership of the residence is exceptional and provides high quality care and support to young people. As a result, they make excellent progress across all area of their development.
- Because of their stays, young people are increasing in emotional resilience and are much more able to deal with new or challenging situations. This is because the staff team work tirelessly to ensure young people receive the best possible care.
- Partnerships with parents, carers and other professionals are extremely

effective.

### **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 of the school by ensuring reports by the independent person are evaluative and clearly identify any shortfalls and the action needed to address these. For example, health care plans and the outcomes of target setting.
- Enhance further the safeguarding procedures by initiating missing from care risk assessment and information for those young people young people who are at risk of going missing and child sexual exploitation.

## **Information about this inspection**

The school was contacted on the morning of day one by the lead inspector to announce the inspection. The inspection took place over three days with feedback provided on day three. During the inspection, records and documentation were examined. Interviews took place with the residential pupils, head of care, headteacher and staff to secure their views upon the quality of care provided. A tour of the premises and grounds was undertaken. Evening activities were also observed over one night as agreed with the school due to an outing for the young people.

## **Inspection team**

Chris Scully

Lead social care inspector

# **Full report**

## **Information about this school**

Archers Brook SEMH Residential School is maintained by the local authority and provides special education for up to 63 children between the ages of 11 and 16 who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The majority of children are day pupils. There are currently 63 children of these 15 children use the residential provision.

The residential provision is available four nights a week from Monday to Thursday. Residential pupils stay for a variety of nights. There is also a range of after-school clubs available to both day pupils and residential pupils.

The school provides residential accommodation on the main site. The residential provision was last inspected 13 May 2015.

## Inspection judgements

### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people **Outstanding**

Young people thoroughly enjoy their time in residence. They relish the opportunities to stay. A parent said that their child shakes with excitement when they know they are coming to stay.

As a result of their stays, young people are making exceptional progress across all areas of their development. For example, young people are not involved in physical interventions here as they are more able to manage their feelings. Young people said that the rules here are strict but fair and they know what the staff expect of them.

Young people engage better with their education because of their stays. This is because they are well prepared for the day by staff that follow each young person's individual routines. Staff know who likes to be up early and others who need some extra persuasion in the mornings to get ready. As a result, they effectively plan for this. Consequently, everyone attends breakfast club and arrives on time for school. Young people have the opportunities to undertake additional qualifications whilst attending residence such as a BTEC National diploma in hospitality. This provides them with an additional qualification and enhances their future life chances.

Young people are actively encouraged to be as independent as possible in relation to their starting points. Evening and morning routines are planned around them so they have plenty of time to see to their own personal care needs. Staff work in partnership with families to ensure young people hear the same messages. This ensures they receive consistent care and support which enables them to make progress. For example, some now get their evening shower without being prompted.

The completion of the new kitchen in Ash is seen as a real positive by the young people. They are currently planning a new range of evening meals. This includes Spaghetti bolognaise, stir fry's and chilli con carne. They are looking forward to budgeting for this and shopping for the ingredients. This allows young people to build useful self-help skills for the future that will support their independence.

Young people have strong, caring and respectful relationships with staff. Parents say staff are wonderful and 'they just get our child.' They said, staff understand when their child needs to have some time on their own to re-group their thoughts and feelings before joining in again with the main group

Young people thoroughly enjoy spending time with their friends in residence and on trips in the community. They take part in an extensive range of activities that incorporate their individual needs, preferences and interests. This includes attending army cadets, youth clubs, swimming, bowling as well as trips to beaches and parks. During the inspection, the young people went to the local park. They confidently used a wide range of equipment and took turns well. Challenging each other as to who could go higher on the swing. They relished the opportunities to encourage staff and visitors to use the zip wire swing, and rewarded them with high fives and congratulations for completing this.

Effective partnerships between the residential provision, school and parents mean nothing is missed. Parents said communication between them and school is excellent. They are pleased that they are called to be told of the positives such as their child has enjoyed an outing, as well as areas of concern. Parents said they are confident to speak to staff and say they are always listened to and are fully engaged in the decisions made about their child.

### **Quality of care and support**

### **Outstanding**

Young people receive high quality care from a highly committed, dedicated staff team. Nothing is too much trouble for them and they go out of their way to ensure each young person has everything that they need to live happy, fulfilling lives. For example, ensuring they arrive at cadets on time. Consequently, they are able to fully participate in their interest and hobbies.

Young people continue to make excellent progress across all areas of their development. They are increasing in confidence when dealing with various social interactions. For example, they said they are now able to 'walk away' instead of being confrontational or aggressive, when others are 'winding them up.'

Staff have an excellent understanding of each young person's individual needs. They take swift, effective action to reassess young people's needs following any changes in a young person's needs, such as changes to their personal circumstances. As a result, young people remain happy and say they know staff are there for them. They confidently seek out certain members of staff with whom they have in-depth discussions about what is going on in their lives and what changes they can make. This is because they feel safe.

Young people and staff have excellent relationships based on mutual respect and a genuine caring interest in each other. Young people enjoy lively, appropriate banter with staff. They are quick to tell visitors about what staff do for them such as, making them eat cockroaches in vinegar from breakfast and make them stay up all night cleaning and doing the dishes! They are quick to point out that this is not really true and giggle with staff about this. This demonstrates the positive relationships they have and that they feel safe to joke with staff and visitors.

Comprehensive care plans and information about young people show the uniqueness and individuality of each young person. All care plans are created in consultation with the young person. As a result, young people have a vested interest in their plans and are fully aware of their targets for the next term. Although in practice young people make tremendous progress there is little written evaluation as to the effectiveness of the targets and how these have supported the progress. This is a primarily a recording issue.

Health care plans are usually well written and link to other records about young people.

However, for some young people new to the school records could be clearer, in particular, as to whether they may have any allergies and if so, how these may manifest themselves. Staff are very well trained in first aid, the safe administration of medication and how to use the schools de-fibrillator. Young people's health is improving as they willingly access a range of health care services at school, such as speaking to therapists, seeing the school nurse or receiving immunisations that they have missed. Overall, young people's health is exceptionally well supported and means they receive the right support and medical attention when they need it.

Young people enjoy a wide range of healthy nutritious meals and snacks. Their evening meal is taken in the school dining hall. Staff and young people have created a much more homely environment at teatime as they all sit together 'like one big family.' The tables are set with tablecloths and napkins and young people help to serve themselves and others. This is very much a relaxed social occasion whereby they can talk about their day and what they are doing that evening. Young people take responsibility for clearing the table and making sure they have the right supplies for the houses such as milk, bread and fruit.

Young people are becoming much more independent and are treated with the utmost dignity and respect. Their wishes and views are actively sought and acted upon where possible by staff. For example, young people recently chose alternative evening activities, which are being considered by staff. They happily contribute financially to some activities such as swimming which instils in them the value of money and that not everything can be covered by school. This enables them to consider cost implications and to budget for some activities.

Young people know how to make a complaint and know that this will be taken seriously by staff. There have been no complaints from young people for some time. Young people said they know how to raise a concern by talking to the staff, teachers or ChildLine.

Parents are confident to call the school at any time and know that someone will be there for them. A young person said he rings home each night to say goodnight to mum. Others said they talk to their families whenever they wish to when staying on residence. Social workers said the communication between them school and parents or carers is very good and means everyone is working together to support young people.

#### **How well children and young people are protected**

#### **Outstanding**

Young people's safety is given the highest priority. Staff are vigilant, but are not risk averse. They encourage young people to take safe risks, for example, when using equipment in parks or when diving into swimming pools. This means they are able to try out new skills safely and develop and understanding of the dangers of using equipment inappropriately.

All staff are trained in safeguarding and child protection. Robust reporting procedures ensure staff act swiftly should they have a concern about a young person's welfare or safety. For example, initiating child sexual exploitation toolkits for young people and challenging the local authority and others on the actions they are taking to keep the young person safe. The designated safeguarding leads are examples of best practice with

regards to their reporting and level of challenge they provide to other professionals. A social worker said, 'staff provided excellent support to a young person, which has resulted in her moving from a high to low risk of child sexual exploitation. This is because they have invested in the child and she feels comfortable around them and is confident to talk to them. She knows they genuinely care about her.'

Staff are skilled communicators who creatively interweave safeguarding topics into the conversation. As a result young people are, for example, developing a better awareness of internet safety and can tell others about how to keep themselves safe.

Young people do not go missing from residence. Staff are aware that there is always the potential for this. They have a clear understanding of the processes to follow should this occur, but as yet there are no individual missing from care risk assessments in place for young people. This would aid the communication between school and the home should this occur, especially where they are medical concerns should a young person miss their medication or be at risk of child sexual exploitation.

Staff are skilled at identifying when young people are feeling upset or anxious. Consequently, they can initiate strategies to support young people and reduce their anxieties, such as providing them with the opportunities for some quiet time. This means physical interventions are not used. There are very few sanctions given in residence. Young people confidently explain the three strike rule and how they need to maintain a certain level of points in school to attend residence. Because of their stays, their behaviour in school is improving as they said they want to stay so need to gain their allocated number of points to do so. This collaborative working means improvement in young people's behaviour is seen across the school.

Young people stay in warm, homely environments. Their bedrooms are personalised to their individual tastes and interests. Photographs of young people adorn the walls in the residential unit and show the fun times they have here. It is evident from the smiles of the young people's faces that they thoroughly enjoy their time here and are provided with an extensive range of fun filled activities that enhance their confidence, self-esteem, and health and life skills.

Robust recruitment and vetting procedures keep young people safe. All visitors to the school and residence are required to sign in and are appropriately supervised while on site. A young person playfully taunted a member of staff who did not have their badge on. He explained that if he did not have his badge on how did he know he was who he said he was. The young people went on to explain that if someone did not have a badge on then that would mean they had not signed in and that they would need to tell staff. Consequently, young people understand the school procedures on keeping them safe.

### **Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers**

### **Outstanding**

A highly committed and dedicated head of care leads the care provision. He works in partnership with the Head teacher to continually improve upon the opportunities available to the young people. For example, the new kitchen was installed in Ash which has

created a more homely and functional environment for young people to use.

The governing body are invested in the school and have a visible presence. The acting chair visits on a regular basis and governors with lead roles, such as the safeguarding governor, also meet with the head. Governors are fully aware of the value of the residence and the positive impact of this on all aspects of young people's lives, including their educational attainment. They are confident to challenge the Head teacher and head of care and are kept abreast of any issues relating to the residential provision. They acknowledge that residence and afterschool activities are highly valued and are an intrinsic part of the school life that offer opportunities and experiences that young people may not otherwise have.

The staff team have worked together for some considerable time. They deliver exceptional care and support to young people. This is because of their excellent partnership working and also the fact that they genuinely care about the young people. They are very well trained and say they feel well supported by the head of care and senior leaders.

The care team are integral to everything the school does. They are active and engaged participants in discussion and the decisions made about young people. They are confident to challenge others, and put forward their suggestions and do so with the best interests of the young people. For example, consulting with parents and doctors regarding a reduction in a young person's medication. This happened. As a result, the young person is more active, does not feel as 'spaced out' and believes they are in a better position to learn and engage.

Internal monitoring of the residence is secure and is designated to various people within school who have a specialism in that field. For example, behaviour management, restraint and sanctions demonstrate the positive effect staying in residence has upon young people's behaviour and social interactions. Monitoring by the governing body is not as secure. This is because the reports lack any evaluation and does not identify any shortfalls or actions to be taken to address these.

Record keeping is very detailed. There are two very minor recording issues but these do not detract from the high quality care and support provided to young people. Overall, there has been an improvement in the quality of recording. This is because subjective language such as 'silly' is no longer used. Consequently, records now say what actually happened.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	111517
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC006621
<b>DfE registration number</b>	896/7208

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

<b>Type of school</b>	
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Samantha Myers-Whittaker
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	12/03/15
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 3382141
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